

ELECTION '97: no one's pulling our strings

# THE INDEPENDENT

Nº 8,226

FRIDAY 21 FEBRUARY 1997

WEATHER: Bright start, then overcast

40p (R 45p)

THE TABLOID

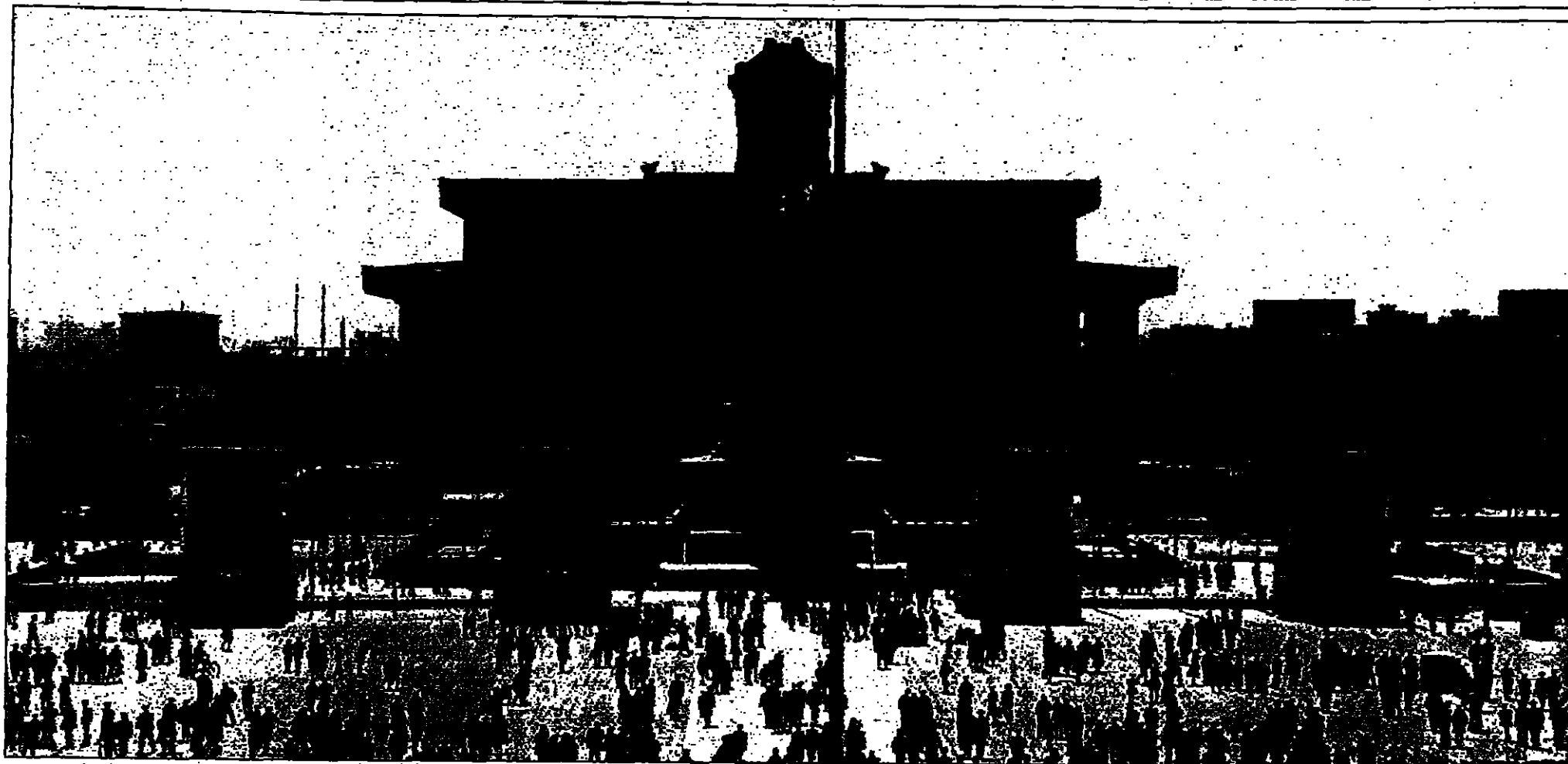
Castro's  
hold on  
America's rich

THE TABLOID

50 years  
of British  
style

POLITICS

New York's  
luvvies for  
Labour PAGE 5



## The flag flaps; the crowd shrugs

Ted Plafker  
Peking

Every day at sunrise in Peking, a large crowd gathers around the flagpole in Tiananmen Square to see the flag being hoisted, accompanied by the dramatic strains of the Chinese national anthem played on loud speakers.

But at 7am Thursday, the regular flag-raising ceremony was transformed into a subtle disclosure. Upon reaching the top of the flagpole, the bright red flag with its yellow stars immediately began falling back to half mast. A moment of confusion followed, then the meaning dawned on people. "Ah, I understand, Deng must be dead," said one man, as much to himself as to his three companions on the windswept open square. Thus did a handful of China's 1.3 billion people learn that Deng Xiaoping had died the night before.

In Tiananmen Square, word spread quickly through the crowd. A few people seemed genuinely stunned, but more seemed unsurprised. Those old enough to remember the death in 1976 of Mao Tse-tung could not help but see the contrast. "When Mao died, you absolutely had to look like you were really distraught. If you didn't you would run into all sorts of problems," said one mid-ranking Peking government official.

One illustration of how much things have changed in China since then was the response of a young woman who, upon hearing the news at the flag-raising, put on a display of mock weeping and sobbing before breaking into a wide smile.

After Deng, pages 12, 13  
Essays, page 16

# Bridgewater three to go free

Patricia Wynn Davies  
and Jason Bennett

Reprieve after 19 years for men charged with killing paper boy

The three men jailed for the murder of the newspaper-boy Carl Bridgewater are set to walk free today, bringing to an end a 19-year campaign by their supporters.

In a hastily convened hearing, the Court of Appeal in London, three appeal judges are expected to declare the convictions unsafe or to grant the 12 men bail pending a final ruling. Following a sudden decision by the Crown Prosecution Service, it will not contest the men's appeal hearing, originally set for April.

The men have always insisted that they were innocent of the killing of the 13-year-old boy, shot dead after apparently interrupting a burglary at an isolated Midlands farmhouse in 1978.

The decision will put the case alongside those of the Guildford Four, the Birmingham Six and Stefan Kiszko as one of the most serious miscarriages of justice in British legal history.

Michael Hickey, 34, and Vincent Hickey, 42, who were cousins, James Robinson, 62,

and Patrick Molloy were convicted in February 1979 largely on a confession by Molloy, who was convicted of the lesser charge of manslaughter. He continued to insist on his innocence, claiming the admission had been beaten out of him, until his death in 1981.

The three remained in prison despite eight separate police inquiries and a lengthy appeal in 1988 and 1989. But the campaign to prove their innocence, led by Anne Whelan, the mother of Michael Hickey, never wavered. Paul Foot, a journalist,

took up the case in 1980, publishing the book *Murder at the Farm: Who Killed Carl Bridgewater?* in 1986.

Ann Skett, mother of Vincent Hickey, said last night: "We just screamed and danced."

Mr Foot said last night that Lord Justice Russell, who presided over the unsuccessful 1988 appeal, "should consider resigning tonight". The men's solicitor, Jim Nichol, said last night that there was "powerful fresh evidence of a false confession."

An appeal hearing was originally scheduled for 8 April, after

Michael Howard, the Home Secretary, agreed to refer the case back for a second time to the Court of Appeal on 26 July last year.

Carl was killed with a shotgun when he stumbled across a burglary at Yew Tree Farm near Stourbridge, West Midlands.

Mr Nichol said the false confession shown to Molloy was a "lying confession shown to him to make him confess. I am delighted but angry that they have spent 18-and-a-half years in prison for a crime they did not commit. I fully expect my clients

to walk out of court tomorrow free men."

George Irving, a leading figure in the Bridgewater Four Support Group, said: "... it seems that the Home Office have decided to throw in the towel so that as little of this story gets told in open court as possible."

It was understood the men had all been moved to Brixton last night to spend what would be their final night behind bars. Once cleared, they can be expected to receive up to £200,000 each.

Following the unsuccessful

1988/89 appeal the case was revived following the disbandment of the West Midlands Serious Crimes Squad, whose members included the detective who took the crucial Molloy confession. But in 1993, the then Home Secretary, Kenneth Clarke refused to refer the case back to the Court of Appeal for a second time.

Two pieces of evidence are largely responsible for the case's latest referral. First, a set of unidentified fingerprints on the bicycle used by Carl Bridgewater which was not disclosed at

the original trial; the prints could have been left by the intruders at the farm, who threw it into a pig-sty. Their existence only came to light in 1994 as part of a police inquiry into the case. Secondly, it has also emerged that Molloy had not been formally arrested on suspicion of the Bridgewater murder when he made his alleged confession. The officer who took the confession was Detective Constable John Perkins, later disciplined over a 1986 case involving allegations of fabricated statements. Two former jurors have also publicly distanced themselves from the guilty verdicts.

## £137m dowry for museums renaissance

David Lister and  
Stephen Goodwin

The National Lottery yesterday handed out a bonanza of £137m to 23 major museums and galleries ranging from the Tate Gallery in London to a new National Museum of Football in Preston.

It left the institutions celebrating a moment as historic as the time in 1753 when a previous lottery funded the building of the British Museum.

The grants, which were being hailed as heralding a renaissance for museums, were carefully and strategically allocated by the Heritage Lottery Fund under Lord Rothschild, sensitive to past criticism that the lottery had favoured high art and the capital at the expense of popular culture and the regions.

Lord Rothschild insisted on acknowledging the widest possible definition of museum

outreach. With an almost post-modernist approach, he saw that the money flowed to good causes as diverse as displaying the history of British art, showcasing the origins of the decorations on canal longboats, and saving millions of feet of priceless film and television material from decomposition.

The Tate Gallery in London, receiving £18.7m, was able to expand its Millbank site and pledge to bring 250 pictures out of storage and on to display — Gainsboroughs, Hogarths, Hockneys et al. It will



Great bonanza: Nicholas Serota, the Tate Gallery's director, unveils hidden treasures yesterday Photograph: Peter Macdiarmid

also have an additional entrance with a grand staircase linking the old and new galleries.

Further along the cultural spectrum a £5.7m grant was approved in principle for a National Museum of Football. It will be located at Preston North End's Deepdale stadium — the oldest ground in the Football League, founded in 1888.

The National Waterways Museum at Gloucester received a £1.4m grant to help improve galleries, education, research and visitor service. Thirty rare items of "roses and castles" were will go on display for the first time.

A narrowboat, decorated with brightly coloured roses and fantasy castles is the classic image of the canals of England. But the origins of the boatmen's art remain uncertain, and the award will help fund research.

Three museums in Manchester will share £35m with £15m going towards a project to extend Manchester Art Gallery. The increased space will enable a dramatic increase from 5 to 50 per cent of the amount of the collection that can be shown. Manchester Museum received £12m and the city's Museum of Science and Industry received

£8.8m towards its expansion.

Elsewhere, the Welsh Slate Museum in Llanberis was awarded £1.6m, and the Museum of Scottish Country Life received £8m. Museums in London which received support include the Wallace Collection (£7.2m) and the National Portrait Gallery (£11.9m).

Almost £14m is being given to the British Film Institute to enable it to record and conserve a vast backlog of uncatalogued material. The National Film and Television Archive holds over 300,000 titles dating back to 1895. But although the BFI cur-

rently preserves nearly 3 million feet of decomposing film each year, the acquisition of nitrate film, safety film and television has outstripped its cataloguing and inspection resources.

Jeremy Thomas, chairman of the BFI, said the lottery injection would go a long way to allay fears that "aspects of our precious film and television heritage might be lost forever".

Lord Rothschild, chairman of the Heritage Lottery Fund, hailed the awards as enabling "a much needed renaissance for museums of the United Kingdom." He went on: "Breathing

life back into museum lungs will be a great achievement for the National Lottery. This country has a spectacular inheritance both in terms of museums and the collections inside them. By the end of the century we would like to have helped to sweep out the nation's attics and cellars and to enable the treasures of this country to be accessible not only to the people of the United Kingdom but also to the world through developments in Information Technology."

Lloyd Grossman, chairman of the Campaign for Museums, said last night: "I am delighted. With the help of this £137m and the £45m of other funding that will be invested in these projects, many of our local authorities, universities and national institutions will be able to realise their vision of serving and educating the public as we move into the new century."

It is a far cry from 1753 when a national lottery funded the building of the British Museum. That lottery raised £101,952, seven shillings and six pence. And in those less egalitarian times the museum was open only to "the learned and curious". It was a few more years before the privilege was extended to the public.



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PICADOR

Islam at bay  
Islam is becoming a nation of Muslim haters. Over the last 20 years, "Islamophobia" has become "more explicit, more extreme and more dangerous" according to a report. Page 3

Railway's free ride  
Thousands of commuters were offered free tickets yesterday after their journeys to work were disrupted when a privatised train company made 71 drivers redundant. Page 6

Palestine torture  
At least 10 people have been tortured to death while in the custody of the Palestinian security forces since they began to move into Gaza and the West Bank in 1994. Page 9

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## news

## significant shorts

## Woman in hospital after fresh outbreak of E.coli

A woman is seriously ill in an Edinburgh hospital in a fresh outbreak of the *E. coli* 0157 food-poisoning bacteria which has claimed 20 lives in Scotland in recent months.

Five people in the Scottish Borders have been confirmed as having the bacteria, although only one is in hospital.

Tom Skinner, the secretary of Borders Health Board said the woman, who has not been named, is being treated at Edinburgh Royal Infirmary. He said that two of the cases appeared to be unrelated but the other three, including the woman in hospital, had attended a traditional Scottish supper in the village of Robertson on 7 February. Health chiefs say they want anyone who was at the supper and who may have experienced symptoms to attend a special clinic, although, at this stage, the source of the outbreak is not known, and investigations are continuing.

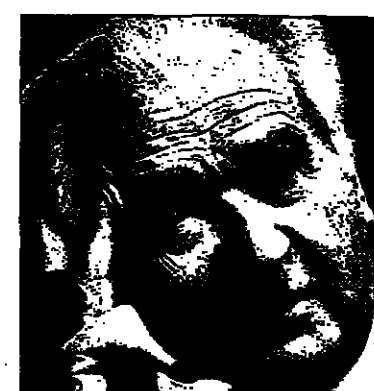
## Trawler skipper walks free

Joseph O'Connor, the operator of a trawler which sank with the loss of its six crew, walked free yesterday after the Court of Appeal quashed his three-year sentence for manslaughter.

Three judges, headed by the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Bingham, ruled that the Crown's amendment of the charges on the 27th day of the trial at Bristol Crown Court last year rendered his conviction "unsafe". Originally Mr O'Connor, 44, from Plymouth, was charged with causing the deaths by gross negligence of the six named members of the crew. It emerged during the trial that the jury would only be able to convict if they found that all six would have died when the *Pescado* sank off the coast of Cornwall.

A new charge was added which alleged the manslaughter of a person unknown. This allowed the jury to find him guilty if it was shown that at least one person would have died because of a failure to provide adequate safety equipment aboard the vessel which the prosecution alleged was "unseaworthy and unstable". Lord Bingham said the amendment "may well have worked injustice on the appellant".

## Lord Chancellor goes to court



Lord Mackay, the Lord Chancellor, is being taken to court over the controversial hike in court fees introduced last month. Lord Justice Simon Brown, the judge in charge of judicial review cases has directed an expedited hearing of the case, believed to be the first of its kind, on 5 March.

The challenge is being brought by former businessman John Witham, 50, who is on income support and cannot afford a £500 fee to issue a writ for libel. The new fee rules, brought in on 15 January, increased the maximum writ fee from £120 to a maximum of £500 and abolished the exemption for people on income support. If Mr Witham succeeds, Lord Mackay may have to pay back fees collected since the rules came into effect. **Patricia Wynn Davies**

## Referendum Party takes Tory votes

Up to a fifth of the people who voted for the Conservatives in the last general election could vote for the Referendum Party this time, according to a new poll of 1,000 previous Conservative voters. Fifty-one per cent would still vote Tory, 13 per cent Labour and 4 per cent Liberal Democrat, if there were an election tomorrow. That would leave the Conservatives with just under three-quarters of their vote at the 1992 general election. James Capel, the City investment bank who organised the poll, has also increased the odds on a 100-seat Labour landslide from 20 per cent to 30 per cent. **Diane Coyle**

## Man held in Billie-Jo investigation

A 36-year-old man was being questioned yesterday in connection with the murder of Billie-Jo Jenkins, the 13-year-old girl found beaten to death in her back garden in Hastings on Saturday. The police stressed that charges were not imminent and all inquiries were continuing. **Jason Bennetto**

## Gangster jailed for life

An American gangster who ordered the contract execution of accountant David Wilson was jailed for life yesterday. Michael Austin, 41, was found guilty, by a unanimous verdict, of the murder of the 47-year-old father of two, shot in the head by masked gunmen at his luxury home near Chorley, Lancashire, in March 1992, while his wife and two daughters were held hostage. Austin, of Fort Lee, New Jersey, pleaded not guilty. During the five-week trial amid heightened security at Liverpool Crown Court the prosecution told how he masterminded a multi-million pound cigarette fraud. Mr Wilson, used as a middle-man by Austin, was murdered on Austin's orders after he spoke to police. The verdict came as Mr Wilson's widow, Barbara, lay on a life-support machine. She died last night, reportedly after a brain haemorrhage.

## THE INDEPENDENT ABROAD

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Denmark ... £1.10 ... £1.00  
Finland ... £1.10 ... £1.00  
France ... £1.10 ... £1.00  
Germany ... £1.10 ... £1.00  
Greece ... £1.10 ... £1.00  
Hungary ... £1.10 ... £1.00  
Italy ... £1.10 ... £1.00  
Japan ... £1.10 ... £1.00  
Netherlands ... £1.10 ... £1.00  
Norway ... £1.10 ... £1.00  
Poland ... £1.10 ... £1.00  
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## people



Nick Ross: Never found his way into the BBC's heavyweight élite of radio anchormen

## Don't call Nick Ross – he's hanging up his microphone

Nick Ross is quitting his popular morning phone-in programme on Radio 4 after 10 years, having never got the call to become one of the corporation's élite group of heavyweight anchormen.

The final straw for the 49-year-old presenter – who aired his grievances at a meeting of BBC executives on Tuesday – is believed to have come when Peter Sissons was asked to take over his slot during the forthcoming general election campaign, when it will link-up with television for a series of 17 bi-media debates involving leading politicians.

Call Nick Ross had also been rumoured to be high on a list of programmes which are to be axed or drastically revamped in a series of sweeping changes by Radio 4's new controller, James Boyle, and his freshly hired squad of thirtysomething commissioning editors.

The show has made headlines, notoriously when an inmate at a high-security prison called in to sympathise with the former Prison Service chief, Derek Lewis, sacked by the Home Secretary, Michael

Howard, in 1995, and when Nick Ross admitted listeners with regional accents were more likely to get their views aired than Londoners.

But Mr Ross – who also presents *Crimewatch UK* on BBC1 – is being careful not to alienate his employers as he prepares to bow out. Diplomatically, he stated yesterday that he had been thinking hard about his future since December when the programme celebrated its 10th anniversary.

"It is a huge privilege to chair a phone-in for the Radio 4 audience. But a decade is a long time. I need to progress, the programme needs to progress and the network needs to progress. I wanted to leave on a high, it's a great institution, one to which I'll now listen and – if I get through – call into."

Mr Boyle, who has been dubbed "McBirt" because of his Scottish origins and alleged devotion to BBC director-general John Birt's allegedly brutal style of management – paid tribute to Ross. "Nick will always be a valued contributor to Radio 4," he said.

**Rob Brown**

## The Belgian for whom fame was not enough

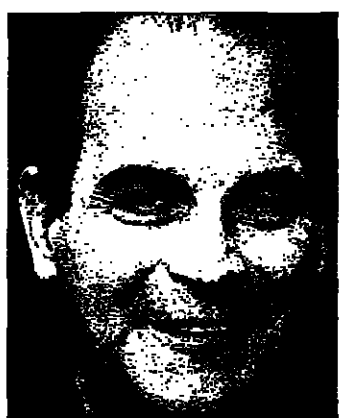
It was a bitter-sweet day for David Suchet yesterday, when he won a prestigious best actor award but revealed that his much-loved characterisation of Hercule Poirot had been given the chop.

For once the Belgian detective was outflanked, after ITV executives ruled that the moustachioed crimebuster had had his day.

Suchet, 50 (right), whose interpretation of the fastidious detective in Poirot still earns him 100 fan letters a week, said: "I love him. I would love to carry on playing him. I wish I was, but it looks as though the curtain has come down on that."

He added: "I think Poirot is such an easy man to live with, and I like his quirks, I like his fastidiousness and his little eccentricities. I never get bored with him at all."

The makers of Poirot, LWT, confirmed yesterday that it would come to an end after the sixth series, which has already been filmed, is shown. It is expected to go out later this year.



The actor revealed the news on the day he took the London Theatre Critics' Award for best actor, an honour he narrowly missed last Sunday at the Laurence Olivier awards.

He had been tipped to win for his powerful performance opposite Dame Diana Rigg in the wildly-acclaimed production of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* at the Aldwych theatre, but it went to Anthony Sher for *Stanley at the National*.

Janet McTeer, however, won best actress for her role in *The Doll's House* – having also taken the title at the Oliviers.

**Marianne Macdonald**

## Mother refused to accept son's death

A mother's determination meant that her son was alive and well yesterday, after doctors had told her and her husband to take him home to die.

When heart experts told Joshua Law's parents, Janet and John, they could not do anything for him, Mrs Law refused to accept this and put out an appeal on local radio. Specialists at Birmingham Children's Hospital were alerted and offered to help.

Joshua who was born at Rotherham District General Hospital, had a serious heart abnormality and had been taken to Killingbeck Hospital, Leeds, there his parents say they were told there was nothing doctors there could do.

But in Birmingham, a £13,000 open-heart operation was carried out. He was given the all clear 72 hours later. He will need a second operation but will be able to live a normal life.

"I knew there must be something that could be done, you can't give up," said Mrs Law.

A spokeswoman for Killingbeck Hospital said: "Whatever decision was taken was a clinical decision."

## briefing

## MEDICINE

## Screening for diseases can damage your health

Screening for diseases could seriously damage your health, according to the *British Medical Journal*. Those who receive positive results may suffer needlessly high levels of anxiety, while those who screen negatively erroneously believe they can maintain their unhealthy lifestyles, it warned.

People found in workplace screening programmes to have high blood pressure took more time off sick, had increased anxiety and saw themselves as less healthy, regardless of whether their hypertension warranted treatment.

In cholesterol screening, several studies have shown a reduction in deaths from heart diseases but a small increase in total mortality. This, it is suggested, is because men who know they are more at risk from heart disease may take other risks as well.

The authors warn that those who receive negative results may also ignore future consequences of their behaviour. "For example, those who screen negative for cancer may feel safe continuing smoking."

**Glenda Cooper**

## SCIENCE

## Bookies cut odds on Nessie

Bookmakers yesterday slashed the odds on the Loch Ness monster emerging from its lair by the end of 1997. News of the discovery of a deep underwater cavern in the loch sent Ladbrokes into a panic, cutting its odds on the discovery of the monster this year by a third.

George Edwards, a 44-year-old Nessie-watcher from Drumnadrochit, on the shore of the Loch, revealed yesterday that he had known about the cavern for a week. In the topsy-turvy world of pre-millennium, pre-election Britain, the bookies are taking no chances and responded as if Edwards had happened upon a footprint of the monster itself, slashing the odds from 150-1 to a measly 100-1. Last night an Aberdeen underwater survey company offered to spend £10,000 on filming the cavern, using technology devised for the North Sea oil industry. **Ian Burrell**



## EMPLOYMENT

## Growth in temporary jobs

The number of temporary workers unable to find permanent jobs has grown by a half since the 1992 General Election, according to an analysis of official figures by the House of Commons library. The research, supplied to Peter Hain, Labour's employment spokesman, shows there are now more than half a million "reluctant" temporary workers.

The data reveals that temporary employment as a whole has risen by a third, to 1,586,000, with increases of more than a half in East Anglia and London. The analysis also reveals that half of all claimants who leave the unemployment register for a job are back on the dole within a year. **Barrie Clement**

## HEALTH

## A lifetime paying price of poverty

Wealth and social class determine your health throughout your life, with the less well off particularly susceptible to heart disease. Two studies in today's *British Medical Journal* call for action to redress inequalities in health after "many years of inaction".

The first study, carried out in Glasgow found that the risk of heart attacks increased sharply with increasing deprivation while the chance of reaching hospital alive decreased and the chance of dying during the attack increased.

The other study carried out in the west of Scotland found that the lower your social class the more likely you are to be heavier, smoke cigarettes, and have bronchitis and angina.

Manual workers were also shorter with worse lung function and less likely to have never smoked. **Glenda Cooper**

## UTILITIES

## British Gas complaints falling

Complaints against British Gas are on the decrease for the first time in months. The Gas Consumers' Council disclosed yesterday. But the January figures – which showed an overall decrease of 6 per cent in complaints which consumers had already tried to resolve themselves – followed an unprecedented number of complaints during 1996.



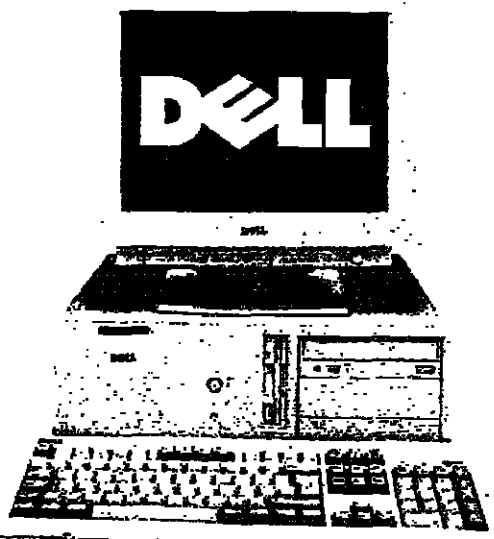
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Recycled paper made up 41.2% of the raw material for UK newspapers in the first half of 1996

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صدا من الامين



# Revolt over race raises ghosts of the Left Bank

John Lichfield  
Paris

For months there has been talk of a new French revolution, a rebellion of the masses against the failures and schemes of the elite. Instead we have a revolt of the elite against the masses. Or more accurately, a passionate protest of the *Le Monde*-reading classes against the direction the masses might be led by the ultra-right.

It could happen only in France and it is, in many ways, the great credit of France that it should be so. It may be, however, that the greatest short-term beneficiary will be — perversely — Jean Marie Le Pen's Front National.

The French intelligentsia — unilaterally labelled in Britain the chattering classes — have mobilised in the last week on a scale, and with an intensity of purpose, not seen in years.

An avalanche of petitions, signed by thousands of people, has engulfed the French government. Most of the signatories belong vaguely to the centre-left, but by no means all. Many are previously politically inactive. All declare a willingness to go to jail rather than obey a proposed new law against illegal immigration (no such penalty is actually envisaged, but no matter).

The signatories range from the internationally celebrated — such as Catherine Deneuve, Isabelle Huppert, Jeanne Moreau, Bertrand Tavernier — to the proudly obscure. One petition is entitled "121 people with names difficult to pronounce". Another is called the "appeal of the unknowns of Saumur-de-Rouergue".

Although their notional target is the clumsy, new immigration law, due to be finalised next week, their fundamental objective is clear: to make a ringing declaration against the ultra-right, xenophobic Front National, following its electoral triumph in Vitrolles near Marseilles earlier this month.

The theatre director, Ariane Mnouchkine, said: "We are witnessing something very beautiful. A moral revolt against a France afflicted by the gangrene of the extreme-right."

The centre-right government of the Prime Minister Alain Juppé has responded in the way it generally responds to determined protest. It has given ground and hopes the problem will go away. It has agreed to scrap the most contentious clause in the new bill: a requirement that French citizens housing certain categories of

have abruptly awoken, spilling for a fight. The result in Vitrolles shocked them; the immigration law gave them a ready-made cause (no matter that it amounted to a tighter rewording of a law introduced by the Socialists 15 years ago).

President Chirac, a wily reader of the national political mood, is said to be deeply concerned about the consequences for his own ramshackle centre-right coalition in next year's parliamentary elections. The Socialist Party leader, Lionel Jospin, ignored the protests at

calling on French conscripts to desert rather than be posted to the war in Algeria.

Unlike earlier campaigns however, the leaders of the present revolt are mostly young and up-and-coming and not linked to any specific party or ideology. Like Mr Tavernier, they are deeply French but also citizens of a cultural and commercial world *sans frontières*: precisely the world that fills the potential FN voters, and many other French people, with dread.

By seeing on the immigration bill as their cause, they are vulnerable to the standard accusation of the Front National: that the intellectual elite is more concerned about foreigners than the French. The immigration bill, though badly drafted and much amended back and forth, is not the Draconian instrument the petitioners complain of.

Out in the suburbs beyond the *périphérique* motorway, illegal immigration is a genuine problem, for French citizens and legitimate immigrants alike. Nothing in the protesters' rhetoric recognises such a legitimate anxiety. Unlike the intellectuals of the 1960s, they risk aligning themselves not with a romanticised French proletariat, but against a demonised, white working class.

In the national short term, Jean-Marie Le Pen has every reason to smile. Just when the economy and jobless figures appeared to be looking up, the petitions have placed immigration at the centre of the political debate. They have also severely restricted the room for anti-Front manoeuvres of Messrs Chirac and Juppé.

In the longer run, however, the protest is a healthy reminder of the strong attachment to humanist values in France. Vitrolles was a warning of the FN's strength. The speed with which the petition brush fire moved from the arts through the professions, and out into the provinces, is a reminder of its ultimate weakness.



Intellectual inspiration: Jean-Paul Sartre's petition to persuade conscripts not to fight in Algeria in 1960 is regarded as the model for the petitions drawn up this year  
Photograph: Henri Cartier-Bresson



Directing the actors: A press conference held by film directors opposing the immigration law

foreigners should inform the authorities when the visitors move on. (This, it was claimed, would turn France into a nation of racist police spies).

The government concession has been contemptuously rejected as insufficient. The petitions — 45 major ones in Paris to date and scores more from the provinces — are still piling up: from statisticians, archaeologists, graphic designers, photographers, cinema owners. A large demonstration of people in expensive coats is planned in Paris tomorrow.

The French intelligentsia, depressed by the betrayals and failures of Mitterrandism, had fallen into a kind of apolitical trance in recent years. They

first, but is now huffing and puffing to catch up with his own potential troops.

It all began on Wednesday of last week when 59 movie directors published the first petition. They were rapidly followed by writers, lawyers and journalists. The movement burst into flames on Sunday with the presentation of a petition from 402 actors, including such *monsters sacrés* as Deneuve, Moreau, Huppert, Miu-Miu.

Petitions are a French tradition going back to the Dreyfus case at the turn of the century. The present campaign, with its direct appeal to break the law, has been compared to a petition circulated in 1960 by Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir,

## British found to be a nation of Muslim haters

Clare Garner

Britain is becoming a nation of Muslim-haters. Over the last 20 years, Islamophobia — a word coined to express the dread or hatred of Islam and Muslims — has become "more explicit, more extreme and more dangerous" in this country, according to a report published next week.

The Runnymede Trust, an independent think-tank on race-relations which last year set up a Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia to conduct the first investigation of its kind, has identified seven "tell-tale features" of anti-Muslim prejudice.

It highlights the dangers of such

attitudes on individuals and society, and demands action.

"Islamophobic discourse, sometimes blatant but frequently subtle and coded, is part of the fabric of everyday life in modern Britain, in much the same ways that anti-Semitic discourse was taken for granted earlier in the century," according to the consultation paper, a draft of which has been leaked exclusively to *The Independent*.

The national epidemic of anti-Muslim sentiment mutes moderate voices within Muslim communities, driving them into the hands of extremists. Islamophobia is feeding "Westophobic" opinion, according to the report.

Members of the commission in-

clude the Bishop of London, Richard Chartres; Rabbi Julia Neuberger; Professor Akbar Ahmed, a Cambridge don and Britain's leading Muslim academic; Dr Richard Stone, chair of the Jewish Council for Racial Equality; and Ian Hargreaves, editor of *New Statesman*.

Islamophobia, a dual "demonisation" of the one million Muslims at home and abroad, is largely blamed on the promulgation of "prejudiced and antagonistic comments, mostly subtle but sometimes blatant and crude" in the media. "Where the media lead, many will follow," writes Professor Gordon Conway, vice-chancellor of the University of Sussex, who chairs the commission.

The first of the seven features of

Islamophobia is that Muslim cultures are seen as "monolithic" and "unchanging", "intolerant of pluralism and dispute".

As a consequence of such oversimplification, criticisms in the British media of countries such as Iraq, Iran or Saudi Arabia are understood as "coded attacks" on Muslims in places such as Bradford, Birmingham or Tower Hamlets.

Claims that Muslim cultures are wholly different from other cultures comprise the second feature. Stereotypes cited in the report include that Muslim cultures mistreat women, whereas other religions and cultures have outgrown patriarchy, sexism and misogyny, and that they are fundamentalist in their interpretation

of scriptures, but analogous literalism is unknown in other faiths.

Third, Islam is often seen as implacably threatening. Islamophobic discourse mentions Islam as a successor to nazism and communism, and contains imagery of both invasion and infiltration. The report quotes an article by Charles Moore in *The Spectator* in which he refers to "hooded hordes".

Claims that Islam's adherents use their faith mainly for political purposes and for strategic and military advantage are the fourth "tell-tale" feature of Islamophobia. The fifth is that hatred of Islam is often mixed with racist opposition to immigration. This "crude colour racism" is combined with a belief that "South

Asian customs threaten to swamp and adulterate...the historic indigenous culture of the British nation."

Furthermore, although Muslims have "important perspectives and insights" to contribute to debates about Western liberalism, modernity and secularism — but they are frequently dismissed out of hand. The final feature is the acceptance of Islamophobia as natural and unproblematic. "The expression of anti-Muslim ideas and sentiments is increasingly respectable," claims the report.

The consequences of Islamophobia include injustice, limitations of personal freedom and sense of belonging, a lack of co-operation in major shared problems such as urban

poverty and deprivation, dangers of disorder (the majority of people killed by racist violence in recent years have been Muslims), and the lost opportunity of cultural interchange.

Many of the commission's proposals were echoed at yesterday's launch of a document, *Election 1997 and British Muslims — For a Fair and Caring Society*, by the UK Action Committee on Islamic Affairs (UKACIA).

The umbrella body for national, regional and local institutions and mosques, called for government funding for Muslim schools and changes to the Race Relations Act which does not outlaw discrimination on the grounds of religion.

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## politics

**15** - John Major: "Madam Speaker. As I rise to speak I am conscious that around me collect the shades of great Tories past: of leaders such as the Iron Duke, such as Benjamin Disraeli, such as Randolph Churchill, such as Arthur Balfour, leaders who - like me - rose in this House to oppose changes to our historic, unwritten constitution, and to save the nation from the damage that such thoughtless change would inevitably create."

Let me start with the so-called Great Reform Act, which would do away with many historic seats - constituencies like Dunwich that have lasted a thousand years

**DAVID Aaronovitch**

## New dangers in a changing world

- on the spurious basis that they have no voters in them. But Dunwich is still there! Still part of this United Kingdom (albeit under the sea)! And as for abolishing pocket boroughs, would this not sever the organic

and ancient link between the local squire and parliament? Has the honourable gentleman considered the effects on the country's pot-wallopers and burgage tenants of the removal of the franchise? No. I say - New Whigs, New Danger!

Let us move on to the pernicious suggestions (of a small band of disgruntled and disaffected radicals) for altering the whole basis upon which members sit in this House and are elected. Consider the effect on the necessary trust between elector and elected of the introduction of secret ballots. Or the venality loosed by any decision to pay MPs. Or the dangers inherent in an extension of voting to anyone, no matter how small their stake in the country and its economy. New Chartists, New Danger!

I turn now to the break-up of the United Kingdom - and most specifically to the proposal for Irish Home Rule. For 10 centuries now, our destiny and that of our Irish brethren has marched in tandem, our unity has strengthened both nations. To that end, Irishmen have served the Empire, and laid down their lives for its unity. To break that link will inevitably mean the end of the United Kingdom entirely. New Nationalism, New Danger!

But what, Madam Speaker, about the reform that would sow disharmony and discord in the very bosoms of the families of Britain, and set husband against wife and brother against sister? I refer, of course, to Votes for Women. When the husband has come to a conclusion about which

vote would best represent the interests of his family and his country, is this to be cancelled out by the woman who stands most to gain from his choice? This is the high road to disaster. No, Madam Speaker. New Suffrage, New Danger!

It is hardly surprising then, that I must also oppose suggestions to devolve power outside this House and away from this government, to enact unnecessary and inhibiting Freedom of Information Acts, to curb the rights of peers who sit in the Lords by right of birth, to in any way alter the present voting system. All such change would be immensely damaging to this country, and we will leave no fear uninvoked, no argument unused and no nit unpicked in our crusade to defeat such change. New Labour, New Danger!

Not, Madam Speaker, that we are opposed to all reforms. We did away with a body to represent London. We signed the Single Europe Act. Hardly a year has passed without an alteration to the powers of local government. But none of these impinged upon the ability of the Government to govern. And that, Madam Speaker, is the ultimate test that we must apply to all such attempts to change our ancient British constitution. I beg to move." (Tory benches: Hear, hear)

# Tactical voting group incurs Labour wrath

Michael Streeter

The Labour Party has been accused of shooting itself in the foot after threatening possible legal action against a tactical voting organisation.

The group called GROT (Get Rid of Them) describes itself as an anti-Tory tactical voting campaign whose sole aim is to remove as many Conservative MPs as possible in the general election. It has targeted 90 seats in which it believes tactical voting, either for Labour or Liberal Democrat candidates, could oust a Tory MP.

However, a leaflet issued by GROT in the Milton Keynes South West constituency urging Liberal Democrats to vote Labour has angered the Labour Party.

A letter from the party's lawyers, Steel & Shamash, says the leaflet could be construed as election expenses on behalf of the Labour candidate and possibly breach the restrictions governing election expenditure.

The letter, sent on 5 February, demands that GROT stops leafletting in Milton Keynes and other constituencies.

It adds: "The strictures laid down in this letter are equally applicable to those constituencies and our clients wish to make

it absolutely clear that they disassociate themselves completely from your campaign and that no authorisation will be given by any Labour candidate or election agent for your leaflets to be included in their return of election expenses."

GROT's spokesperson, Patti Akrigg, described the letter as "extraordinary", adding: "It's a foot-shooting exercise. They have so much more to gain from our help."

She said the letter had caused "near panic" among some organisers who could be legally liable if the party sued. At least one member has already left GROT because of the legal warning.

As a result the group's co-chairman Bruce Kent, a former Labour candidate and leading figure in the campaign for nuclear disarmament, has written to GROT supporters asking them not to incur any expenses in backing a Liberal Democrat or Labour candidate without the consent of that party's local election agent.

GROT believes that tactical voting by supporters of the third party for the main rival to the Conservative candidate in targeted seats could remove scores of Tory MPs.

The organisation is now

confined largely to writing letters to local and national newspapers and it is trying to fund a national advertising campaign.

Bob Godall, a GROT campaign worker, said: "This sort of implied threat will just make us try harder."

The organisation is writing to local newspapers in the Wirral South constituency urging the electorate there to vote tactically in next Thursday's by-election.

In the 1992 general election, the Conservatives received 25,590 votes, Labour 17,407 and the Liberal Democrats 6,581 - which if switched to Labour would bring them close to the Tories.

An opinion poll yesterday in the Liverpool Daily Post put Labour 12 points ahead of the Tories - but suggested that one-fifth of the electorate was still undecided.

A Labour Party spokeswoman said yesterday that the letter had been sent because of the strict laws surrounding election expenses incurred by individual parties.

On the value of GROT campaign the spokeswoman added: "They advocate voting Liberal Democrat in some seats - we would ask people to vote Labour in every seat."



John Prescott, deputy Labour leader, greeting the deputy prime minister, Michael Heseltine, before a television debate on Merseyside in front of Wirral South voters yesterday. Mendes Campbell of the Liberal Democrats was caught in traffic.

When it did begin, the debate was marred by abuse hurled at the politicians. A woman was screaming at Mr Heseltine that he had lied to voters and Mr Prescott sticky moment came when quizzed about selective schools.

When the cameras stopped rolling Mr Heseltine, who had borne the brunt of abuse, was heard to mutter to the audience: "Card-carrying members of the Labour Party."

Photograph: John Voos

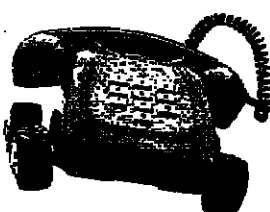
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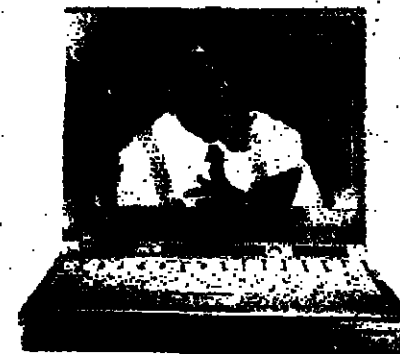
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# Howe rejoins fray over Europe

Anthony Bevis  
Political Editor

A pro-European alliance of Kenneth Clarke, Tony Blair and Lord Howe, the former deputy Prime Minister, yesterday forced John Major to dump Wednesday's "hostility" to the single currency.

Challenged by the Labour leader at Commons Question Time, the Prime Minister said he backed the view of his Chancellor, that the Government was "not hostile in its attitude to a single currency - the position remains that we have an open option".

The double U-turn - in which the Government turned full-circle to the precarious balance hammered out between cabinet factions last month - began to emerge after a meeting between Mr Clarke and Malcolm Rifkind, the Foreign Secretary, in the early hours of yesterday.

In a statement issued to the Reuters news agency, the two men announced: "We are hostile to the notion that a single currency can proceed at any stage on a non-convergent basis."

That complex formula was the only way in which the two men could square the circle of Mr Rifkind's Wednesday statement, that the Government was on balance "hostile to a single currency", and the cabinet agreement of 23 January.

The Cabinet had then agreed that it was "very unlikely but not impossible" that the single currency could proceed, with or without sterling participation, at the start of 1999.

But it became clear during the course of yesterday morn-



Back in action: Lord Howe, whose attack on Margaret Thatcher's hostility to Europe played a crucial part in her demise

Photograph: David Rose

ing that Mr Rifkind's "slip of the tongue" - the Chancellor's generous explanation for the "hostile" position taken by his colleague - had been allowed to remain as a statement of policy, the splits in the Tory ranks would have threatened to break the party itself. Even the right-wing Michael Forsyth, Secretary of State for Scotland, suggested

that Mr Rifkind had been unwise to stray from the Cabinet's even-handed approach.

In a BBC radio *Today* interview, Lord Howe warned that he would find it hard to back a government "that is in principle hostile to the concept of a single currency". The man who triggered the downfall of Margaret Thatcher in 1990 went on:

"One's enthusiasm is bound to diminish if one is confronted with a series of steps constantly being taken in the wrong direction."

The implicit threat was that Lord Howe - and other Tory grandees, who sounded a similar warning in a letter to *The Independent* last year - could cause every bit as much trouble

for Mr Major as the Eurosceptics.

But the movement was not all one-sided yesterday. Gordon Brown, the shadow Chancellor, said after a Washington meeting with US Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin that he had told him: "In the judgement of myself and Tony Blair, there are real obstacles facing Britain

and other countries which are increasingly difficult to overcome by 1999." But he went on: "If conditions are right, we will retain the option of joining the single currency in the next Parliament and in the first wave. I do not believe a single currency is a threat to the nation-state."

Donald Macintyre, page 17  
Labour's EMU criteria, page 19

## Labour accused of steamroller plan for constitution

Colin Brown  
Chief Political Correspondent

Conservative fury over Labour's plans for constitutional reform last night spilled over into allegations that a Labour government would try to steamroller proposals for a Scottish parliament through the Commons.

John Major opened the first set-piece debate against Tony Blair in months by attacking Labour's plans as "flawed" and warned they would become a key issue on which he would fight the forthcoming general election.

There were Tory shouts of "disgraceful" when Mr Blair refused to give a guarantee that the legislation for the Scottish parliament would be taken entirely on the floor of the Commons, which could help to sidestep possible Labour backbench rebellions.

The Labour leader accused the Tories of "dirty tricks" as his keynote speech defending Labour's constitutional reforms against a sustained attack by the Prime Minister was interrupted by interventions from ministers and Tory backbenchers.

"We support devolution - we oppose separatism. No change is the enemy of the union, not devolution."

"To say you support the status quo is to defy wit, instinct and history," said Mr Blair.

David Hunt, the former Secretary of State for Wales, challenged Mr Blair in the closing seconds of his speech to answer 16 key questions that he had failed to answer over his party's plans for a Scottish parliament with tax-raising powers, a Welsh assembly and reform to the House of Lords.

With Labour MPs pointing

across the chamber at the Tory benches, the Speaker, Betty Boothroyd, was drawn into the row when she confirmed she had seen a piece of paper being passed by John Major's parliamentary aide, John Ward, to Mr Hunt before he intervened.

The only weapon Mr Major had, said Mr Blair, was fear, but he added: "The Conservatives no longer frighten because they are no longer believed. They are not believed about this, and they are not believed about what is happening around the country as that fear is being driven out by the hope of change."

Mr Blair was repeatedly chal-

**"Tories do not frighten us because they are not believed. Hope is driving out fear"**

lenged over the "West Lothian question" - named after the former constituency of the Labour MP Tam Dalyell, who opposed Labour's plans for Scottish devolution in the 1970s on the ground that Scottish MPs could vote on issues such as taxation in Westminster but Westminster MPs would have no votes in a Scottish parliament.

The Labour leader responded by quoting the 1974 Conservative manifesto proposing a Scottish parliament, backed by Margaret Thatcher and a string of current Cabinet ministers, including Malcolm Rifkind, the

Foreign Secretary, Ian Lang, the President of the Board of Trade, and Michael Forsyth, the Scottish Secretary, who clashed four times with Mr Blair across the despatch box.

Mr Forsyth, roared on by his own side, said the Tories had abandoned Scottish devolution because they could not answer the West Lothian question. Mr Blair said that was "complete and total nonsense".

The Tories had an in-built majority in the Lords, said Mr Blair. Under a Labour government, over 68 per cent of defeats in the Lords were due to hereditary peers, but only 13.5 per cent under the Government.

Opening the debate, Mr Major rejected Labour's plans as a "ragbag", which could lead to employees in England being charged an extra 3p in the pound - equivalent to £300 a year for a man on average earnings - if they worked for companies such as Kwik-Fit which had its head office in Scotland, and may be subject to the higher tax levied by Labour's proposed Scottish parliament.

The plans drawn up by the Labour Party - with the Liberal Democrats in tow - are a blueprint that would undermine the unity of the UK and erode the authority of this Parliament. As they stand, any member of this House should be ashamed to endorse them," Mr Major said.

Liberal Democrat leader, Paddy Ashdown said: "I believe this is the right moment for our country to replace some of the workings of our constitution and our political system. It is the right moment to ensure that Britain enters the next century with a constitutional system for the modern age."

## Ashdown caught short on income tax strategy

Anthony Bevis  
Political Editor

The Liberal Democrats yesterday upstaged themselves on a commitment to impose an extra penny on the standard rate of income tax.

Introducing a pre-manifesto policy statement at a London press conference, Paddy Ashdown repeated the long-standing formula that an extra penny "may be necessary" to pay for an extra £2bn to be invested in education.

The Liberal Democrat leader added that the final tax decision would be disclosed in a speech being planned by Malcolm Bruce, the party's Treasury spokesman.

Unfortunately, Mr Ashdown had clearly not read the policy statement he was unveiling, "Priorities for Britain".

There was some confusion and embarrassment when *The Independent* pointed out that the document said: "We will invest at least an additional £2bn per year in education. We will raise an extra 1p of income tax to pay for this."

A number of other policy shifts were revealed by the paper - including a reduction from "up to 750,000" to "nearly half a million" in the number of low-pay employees who would be taken out of the income tax net - a redistributive move financed by a new 50 per cent top rate of income

tax for people with a taxable income of more than £100,000.

The Treasury calculates that 140,000 people would pay an extra £1.4bn with the new 50p, higher rate tax band, and that 470,000 people would be freed from tax, at a cost of £1.2bn, if personal allowances were increased by £200.

Mr Ashdown said: "Only the Liberal Democrats guarantee to invest in education, invest in Britain's long-term prosperity, put patients first in the NHS and look after the environment."

"Britain needs the Liberal Democrats to tell the truth about what needs to be done, what it will cost and how we will pay for it."

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## news

## The day commuters were taken for a free ride



Commuters were given free tickets at Waterloo station yesterday after their journeys to work were disrupted when a privatised train company cut 71 drivers, writes Fran Abrams.

Thousands of travellers on South West Trains were given a free day's

travel or season ticket extension. But few passengers said the disruption would affect the way they would vote at the general election.

Paul Masure, a marketing manager from Gosport, said transport was not an issue for him; he would vote for

the party which would raise his disposable income.

Janet Hill, a secretary who works in Portsmouth, said: "Some things should be in the hands of the Government, and the rail service is one of them. These people will walk away

and leave them in a mess," she said.

The offer from Brian Souter, chairman of Stagecoach, which took over the company last year, followed the cancellation of 200 trains this week in London, Surrey and Hampshire.

Photograph: Peter Macdiarmid

## Pill scare is blamed for rise in abortions

Glenda Cooper  
Social Affairs Correspondent

Nearly 8,000 abortions have now been linked to the 1995 scare over the contraceptive Pill, raising fresh criticism of ministers over their handling of the affair.

The Birth Control Trust said there was "no other convincing explanation" for the rise of 14.5 per cent in the number of abortions during April to June 1996 compared with the same period in the previous year.

A total of 42,683 terminations were carried out on residents of England and Wales, a rise of 5.241. The previous quarter, January to March 1996, immediately after the scare, showed

an increase of 7 per cent in terminations - or 2,688 abortions. The figures reverse the previous downward trend in abortions.

The number of abortions of non-resident women went up from 2,290 in the June quarter of 1995 to 2,502 last year, representing a rise of 9.3 per cent.

The cause of the scare was a government warning in October 1995 that the newer "third generation" pills carried a small but increased risk of causing blood clots. Ministers and the Committee on the Safety of Medicines were strongly attacked by doctors over the warning and the way it was put out, with some doctors hearing about it from the media and unable to counsel or advise their patients.

Worried women inundated helplines, surgeries and family planning clinics to try to get more information with many simply stopping taking their contraception altogether.

The figures mean the rate of abortions is 3.3 per thousand resident women aged 14 to 49, almost the same level as for the months January to March when the highest rates are usually recorded. The number of abortions peaked in 1990 when there were 3.5 abortions per thousand resident women, but since then it has been decreasing.

The Birth Control Trust, which studied the announcement and concluded that the panic caused was unnecessary, said the scare was the only re-

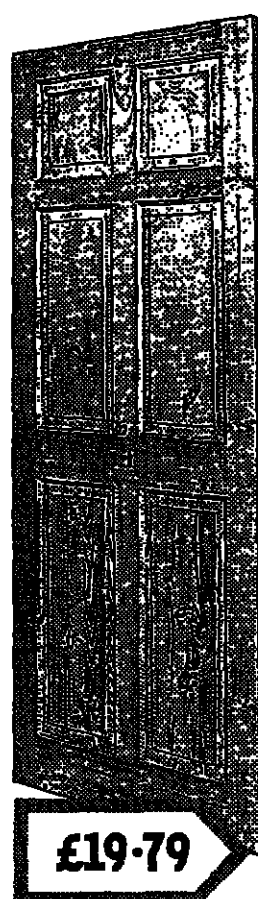
alistic explanation for the rise. "Nobody can categorically prove that the additional abortions have been caused directly by the Pill scare," said Ann Farell, the trust's director. "But it would be naive to imagine there is no association, and there is no other convincing explanation for the increase. Public confidence in the Pill has been needlessly shaken, and we are now seeing the consequences."

The British Pregnancy Advisory Service, a non-profit making organisation which advises women facing unplanned pregnancies, said it had been very busy during 1996. "Our own figures show this increase is distributed across England and Wales. It appears that every region of the country has seen an increase," said Carolyn Roberts, BPAS's marketing director. She added that figures recorded by the organisation so far this year clearly indicated that the increase was continuing.

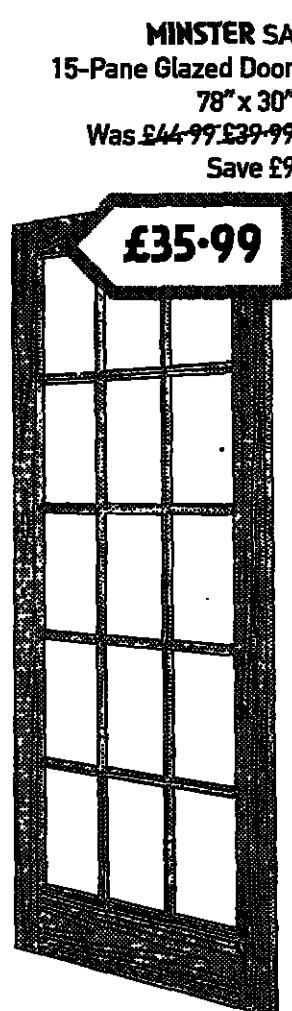
The Family Planning Association called for more help and advice for women affected by contraception scares, saying calls to its own helpline more than doubled to 8,000 a month in the three months following the Pill scare.

The FPA's chief executive, Anne Weyman, said the "figures highlight the need for more support and information to enable women to use new methods effectively and with confidence to avoid unplanned pregnancy".

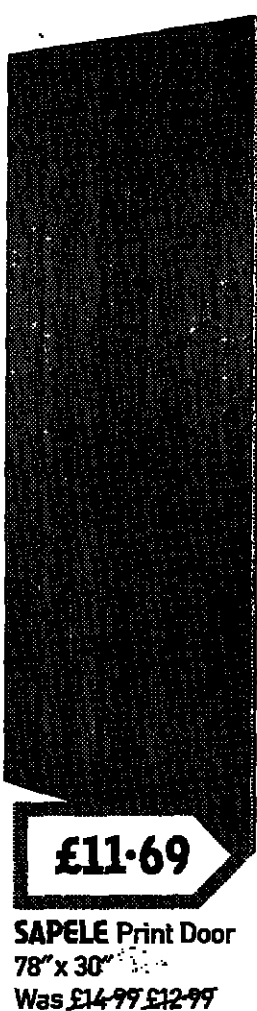
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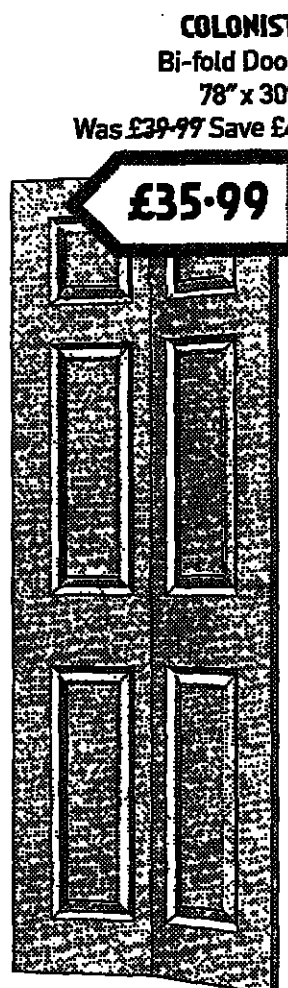
**COLONIAL**  
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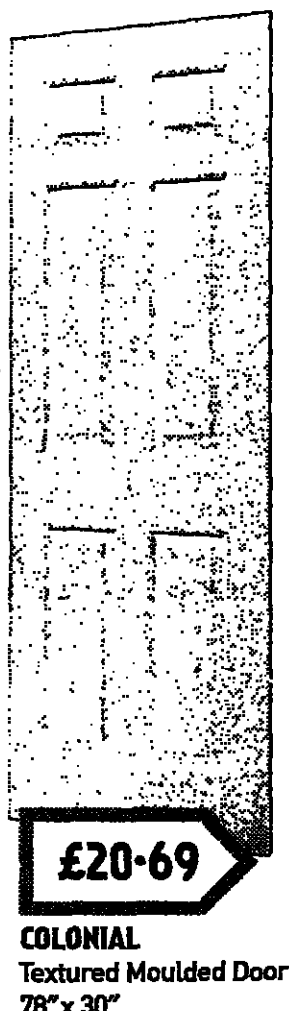
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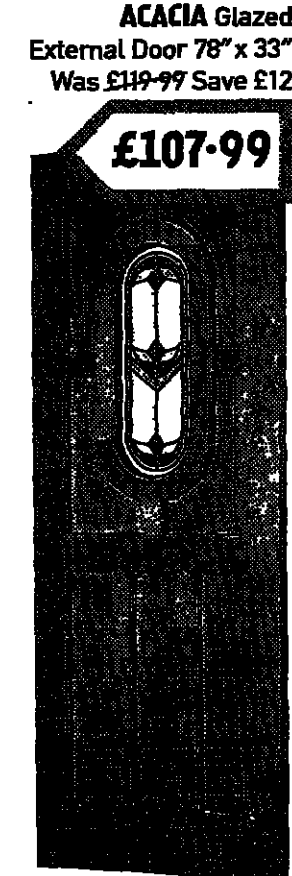
**COLONIAL**  
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78" x 30"  
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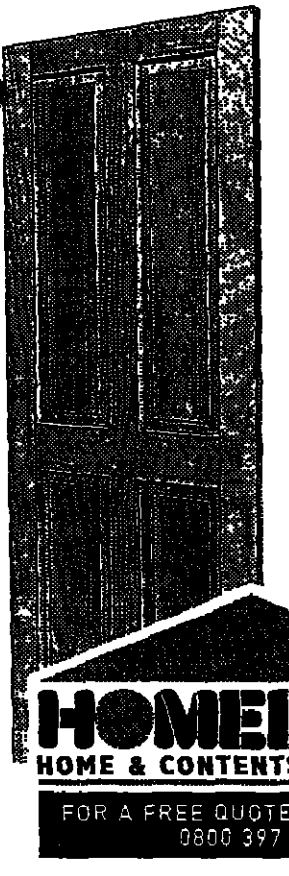
**ACACIA Glazed**  
External Door 78" x 33"  
Was £119.99 Save £12



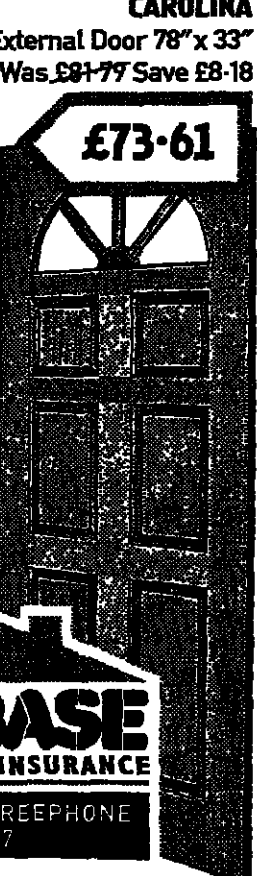
**VICTORIAN**  
Knotty Pine  
Glazed Door  
78" x 30"  
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## Demand for student places levelling off

Judith Auld  
Education Editor

University applications have risen slightly this year, according to figures released yesterday by the Universities and College Admissions Service.

However, numbers were still down on those for the year before, suggesting that demand for places may be levelling off. Competition for places will remain stiff because the number of 18-year-olds has started to rise.

Ministers froze the number of student places in November 1995 after nearly a decade of rapid expansion. Sir Ron Dearing's review of higher education is at present considering how and if student numbers should continue to grow.

The figures show that 347,037 applications for places this autumn had been received by the closing date of 15 December, an increase of just 0.9 per cent on last year but a fall of 0.7 per cent compared with the previous year. Last year's drop was the first since the Government sanctioned the expansion of higher education 10 years ago.

A spokesman for the com-

mittee of vice-chancellors said they were concerned that worries about financial hardship were putting off some applicants. "But we are pleased that demand has remained as buoyant as it has, despite this. Pressure on places continues to grow," he added.

Among individual subjects this year, applications for engineering courses decreased sharply, particularly electrical engineering, down 14 per cent and civil engineering, down 11 per cent. Computer science, by contrast, was up by 13.6 per cent. Maths applications were down by 3 per cent, but those for physics rose by 8 per cent. Applications for teacher training courses fell by 12 per cent.

More than 53 per cent of applicants are women. Asians form 9 per cent of the total and blacks 3 per cent.

The figures include adjustments for the addition of new courses. Tony Higgins, UCAS chief executive, said: "Even allowing for the difficulty of comparing this year's figures and last year's, there does seem to be an increase in demand for higher education ..."

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## Bleak picture of abuse inside women's prisons

Jason Bennetto  
Crime Correspondent

Women inmates are having to endure "unacceptable" conditions at least a third of the country's female jails, with widespread abuse and overcrowding, the chief inspector of prisons revealed yesterday.

Prison officials admitted yesterday that there were only enough free cells for women inmates to last another two to three weeks. The overcrowding crisis has been caused by a rapid rise in the number of women being jailed.

Inspections at three jails in England found serious flaws in the way women are being dealt with, and provided a depressing picture of understaffed establishments grappling with deteriorating regimes and conditions.

They also identified a growing problem of female inmates forcibly removing drugs hidden inside fellow prisoners.

The inspections took place at

Holloway prison in north London, the female unit at Risley, Cheshire, and the women's wing at Low Newton, Durham.

Sir David said that significant improvements had been made at Holloway since he took the unprecedented step in December 1995 of withdrawing his team in protest, but still found a catalogue of problems, including "very serious intimidation and violence".

He also reported the practice of "crutching" in which women inmates who concealed drugs inside their bodies were overpowered by other prisoners who then forcibly removed the drugs for their own use.

A security review was highly critical and found that there was no closed-circuit television on the perimeter fence. Suicide prevention systems had "sloppy and dangerous" record-keeping, which was to be "deplorable", said the report.

Conditions at Low Newton, which houses 57 women in a wing designed to accommodate no more than 40, were described as "unacceptable" and "must not be allowed to continue". Sir David added: "The problems are twofold - too many prisoners and not enough staff. Urgent action is required."

He went on: "For far too long the training of staff to work in women's prisons has been neglected by the Prison Service, and the chickens are coming home to roost."

At Risley, conditions were also "unacceptable". Chronic staff shortage and prisoners being locked in their cells except for meal times were reported to the inspectors. Urinals were also still in place in the toilets. There was also evidence of "crutching".

Richard Tilt, director general of the Prison Service, said the overcrowding was caused because the female population rose 23 per cent last year to a total of 2,438. While insisting that many of the problems identified in Sir David's reports had been rectified since the inspections, Mr Tilt acknowledged that the rising prison population, combined with a tight budget, presented the service with real problems.

He added: "We are a cash-limited service, we have finite resources. But we are doing the best we can under the circumstances we find ourselves in."

## Is this England's only surviving national folk art?



The 'Roses and Castles' artwork on narrowboat cabins and their water cans - such as the one shown above - is believed by the National Waterways Museum at Gloucester to be England's only surviving indigenous folk art, writes Stephen Goodwin.

A £1.14m Heritage Lottery Fund grant announced yesterday will enable the museum to delve further into the origins of the boatmen's art, which lives on at a canal-side yard in Northamptonshire.

"Roses and Castles" is often attributed to gypsy influence, but it is more likely to have been copied from the fantasy castles and floral swags painted on mass-produced furniture and pottery in the 19th century.

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\*Based on Manufacturer's Recommended Retail Price and £665.00 estimated on-the-road costs covering delivery to the dealer, 18 months road fund licence, estimated cost of fuel and number plates. \*\*Manufacturer's Recommended Retail Price including VAT at 17.5% at time of going to press. †Total charges for credit includes an administration fee of £55.00 (includes VAT), payable with the first monthly payment. ††Further charges may be made subject to mileage and condition if the vehicle is returned at the end of the finance agreement. Written quotations are available on request from Ford Credit Europe plc, PO Box 46, Iwerwood, Essex CM13 3AR. Guarantees and indemnities may be required. Finance is provided subject to status to over 18s only. Certain categories of business users are ineligible. Subject to availability. Offer available on vehicles registered between February 1, 1997 and May 31, 1997.

## Irish warning on McAisley detention

Alan Murdoch  
Dublin

The Irish government yesterday underlined its stern warning to Britain over the detention conditions of Roisin McAisley amid growing health concerns for the prisoner who is in category A security while facing extradition proceedings.

Irish ministers are alarmed that Ms McAisley, who is more than six months pregnant, has not been given assurances that her baby will not be taken from her at birth and are fearful for her physical and psychological health.

The British Ambassador, Veronica Sutherland, was called

to over a mortar attack on a British army base in Omagh last June.

Mr Spring told Mrs Sutherland difficulties over the prisoner's treatment "had the potential to cause damage to the shared objectives of both governments in the peace process".

Detention under category A status has restricted Ms McAisley's family visits and contact with other prisoners. Dublin maintains her pregnancy means she is unlikely to be a threat in terms of escaping.

Dublin sources yesterday described her strip-searching after visits as "appalling treatment" for a pregnant woman, and wants her detention conditions improved "as soon as possible".

Senior sources fear the case could provide damaging propaganda against Britain if her treatment does not improve, and are mindful of the upsurge of public support for Republicanism in the aftermath of the IRA hunger strikes in the early 1980s. For this reason Dublin wants assurances about her future treatment to be public.

In London, the German Ambassador, Jürgen Osterheft, is reported to have told Labour MPs that his government's position on granting bail to Ms McAisley had been misunderstood by the Crown Prosecution Service.

After meeting the German Ambassador to Ireland, the deputy leader of the main Fianna Fail opposition party, Mary O'Rourke, said she was advised the Germans were not insisting on bail. Mrs O'Rourke last week went to Holloway for a 35-minute visit with the prisoner and complained to the governor about the 24-hour lighting of her cell and half-hourly inspections throughout the night.

The British Prison Service last week denied that Ms McAisley would be shackled to a prison officer during birth.



Roisin McAisley: Concern about her 'appalling treatment'

in on Wednesday to hear protests from the Irish Foreign Minister, Dick Spring, over the conditions in which Ms McAisley, 25, is being held in Holloway Prison, north London.

Privately, Dublin sources were yesterday putting the political risk more bluntly, warning that, given health concerns for Ms McAisley's baby, British mishandling of the case risked creating a new Republican martyr.

The daughter of the former Westminster MP Bernadette McAisley is in jail pending a German extradition applica-

### DAILY POEM

#### New Gravity

By Robin Robertson

Treading through the half-light of ivy and headstone, I see you in the distance as I'm telling our daughter about this place, this whole business: a sister about to be born, how a life's new gravity suspends in water. Under the oak, the fallen leaves are pieces of the tree's jigsaw; by your father's grave you are pressing acorns into the shadows to seed.

"New Gravity" comes from Robin Robertson's first collection, *A Painted Field*, published today by Picador at £6.99. The author will be reading at the Voice Box in the Royal Festival Hall, London on Tuesday 25 February at 7.30pm.





## news

# Hume attacks 'vote-stealing' by Sinn Fein

David McKittrick  
Ireland Correspondent

The SDLP leader John Hume yesterday launched an unusually scathing attack on Sinn Fein and the IRA, questioning their good faith and warning the electorate that a vote for Sinn Fein was in effect a vote for violence.

Calling for an immediate ceasefire, he accused Sinn Fein of vote-stealing, intimidation of SDLP workers and declaring: "Having availed of our good faith as honest brokers, they now intend to cast us aside using any means, fair or foul."

While Mr Hume did not personalise his criticisms on Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams, his criticisms of Mr Adams, whose violence he has roundly condemned - were his sharpest for a number of years. The "Hume-Adams" relationship, which has developed during the 1990s into close co-operation on the peace process, has considerably toned the two parties' public exchanges.

All the signs are that the Hume-Adams association, by which is meant the efforts of the two leaders to advance the peace process, will remain in being, since the two leaders regard it as transcending conventional party politics. But it is clear that, at least for the election campaign, the gloves are off.

Mr Hume's criticisms, contained in a lengthy article in the *Belfast Irish News*, seem to reflect both electoral concerns and his dismay that the IRA is



Hume: A vote for Sinn Fein is in effect a vote for violence

clearly intent on more violence during the election campaign. The SDLP has been under pressure in some constituencies to reach an agreement with Sinn Fein in order to remove Unionist MPs who hold their seats by virtue of a split nationalist vote.

Mr Hume said: "To make an electoral pact with Sinn Fein without an IRA ceasefire would be the equivalent of asking our voters to support the killing of innocent human beings by the IRA. The electorate should be aware that in voting for Sinn Fein that is what they are voting for: Sinn Fein call it the armed struggle."

Martin McGuinness of Sinn Fein responded by claiming that some leading figures in the SDLP "are frightened out of their wits that Sinn Fein will do really well in the coming election". Mr McGuinness himself is thought to have a fair chance

of winning the Mid-Ulster seat, while Mr Adams is regarded as favourite to win back West Belfast from the SDLP. In the last election Sinn Fein's vote went up while the SDLP's dropped.

But apart from the immediate electoral considerations, Mr Hume's words will generate speculation that he is losing faith in the ability of Mr Adams to deliver a fresh IRA cessation of violence. His article closed with the words: "This cannot go on... Without a ceasefire we are going to have to look elsewhere for a means of making progress."

Although it is not immediately obvious what alternative courses are open to the SDLP, this will be taken as an unmistakable indication that general nationalist patience with Sinn Fein is growing thin.

The parents of a soldier who was shot and killed by an IRA sniper yesterday made an impassioned plea to the terrorists to call a ceasefire and make their son's death last.

John and Rita Restorick made their emotional appeal for peace in an open letter to politicians including John Major, US President Bill Clinton, Labour leader Tony Blair, Irish premier John Bruton and Sinn Fein leader, Gerry Adams.

Their son, Lance Bombardier Stephen Restorick, 23, was killed by a sniper's bullet last Tuesday as he stopped cars at an army check-point in south Armagh. His funeral service will take place on 24 February.



Stage-struck: Budding hopefuls, Carrie Fletcher and Darryl Moore, rehearsing at the Sylvia Young Theatre School in London Photograph: David Rose

## Jack's the lad for stage hopefuls

Louise Jury

Don't put your daughter on the stage as the advice to Mrs Worthington. It was advice Donna Hanford and her fiancé husband, Jason, were more than happy to ignore.

Their son Jack reputedly became the highest-paid child actor in advertising as the brown-eyed star of the Safe-way's commercials, though the fee was secret. Daughter Scarlett is set to follow suit for the Danish food chain, Netto. At the age of 21 months, she makes her screen debut next Monday.

But though acting income is a useful addition to school fees, and some families will go to dramatic lengths to give their

youngsters the chance of success, few will become a Jack Hanford and end up with thousands in the bank.

Jackie Patten, of the Young's agency, said that over the years there had always been one child in an advertisement who caught the public imagination. Patsy Kensit, the actress, for instance, made the peas go pop for Bird's Eye.

But many children are successful actors without instant recognition or much money. The big West End shows might pay £20 to £25 a performance, but under-13s can only do 40 shows a year. However, much

prestigious work, such as for the Royal Shakespeare Company, pays considerably less. "But the parents get a kick from seeing their children on stage and enjoying themselves," Mrs Patten said.

Not that being stage-struck is the preserve of parents alone. Joanne Hawes, who looks after children in shows including *Oliver!* and *Miss Saigon*, said: "Some children are so desperate to take part they pester their parents who haven't had anything to do with theatre before to let them do it."

One mother of a stage-struck son said at acting classes there

were many pushy middle-class parents who saw drama as a route to fame and fortune. "They see their kids as potential Macaulay Culkin goldmines," she said. But working class parents were just as pushy given the chance and were noticeable at open auditions where anyone can turn up.

David Shute, who made the Netto commercials, said they normally used children who were already on agents' books. He added: "If mum is on the books of a casting agent, she should know that television shoots are long and boring and not particularly glamorous."

## Obsessed gunman planned massacre

Jonathan Foster

A man obsessed with guns wrote a "truly horrific" four-page essay depicting a massacre in his home town in which he shot dead shoppers and police officers, a court heard yesterday.

Jason Curtis, 28, of Llandrindod Wells, Powys, wrote the essay after police withdrew his firearms licence in 1994. In it he listed officers by name and gave step-by-step details of the revenge he planned to take on those he blamed for taking away his beloved guns and firearms certificate.

The judge, Mr Justice Mance, who considered psychiatric reports on Curtis before jailing him yesterday for four-and-a-half years for 10 firearms and drug possession offences, described the document as "a truly horrific piece of writing".

As extracts from the chilling essay were read to Caernarvon Crown Court, it was clear the sights of Curtis' guns were trained on mass murder in the streets of his sleepy country town.

It began: "It was a warm sunny morning on the 8th July, and the people in Llandrindod Wells went on there [sic] normal merry way, either to school, shops or work, no one would have guessed [sic] of the holocaust [sic] to come..."

The imagined killing spree begins at the police station.

Graphic descriptions follow, named officers meeting their deaths as bullets shattered their skulls and flooded the floor with blood.

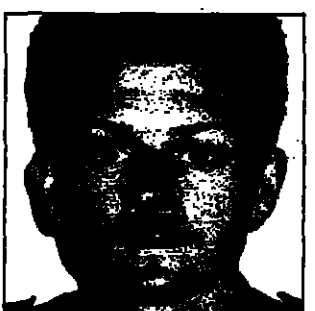
Curtis, who had been allowed to keep 14 firearms, wrote about how he would wear camouflage trousers and commando boots, and use a Beretta 9mm pistol and a .38 revolver for "hunting the enemy".

In his account, Curtis shoots two more constables before kicking open the door. "Raising the pistol, he began to fire, pumping round after round into the chest area, the momentum of the tenth bullet [sending the officer] crashing through the plate glass window and onto the pavement below. Jason leaned out of the window, smiled and left the police station."

Out on the street, Curtis reloads and crosses the road.

"A car screeched behind him, the bumper nudging his leg. Jason turned to the driver. Levelling the pistol he fired twice... a deadly silence stretched across the bewildered shoppers... Mass panic had now broken out as people trampled each other to get out of the range of fire."

In police interviews, Curtis had insisted that he had no intention of carrying out the threat - he said that he had merely written about the dream because it was so vivid and it had shocked him.



Curtis: Horrific revenge

## English Heritage warms to the V&A Boilerhouse

Stephen Goodwin  
Heritage Correspondent

"Extremely hideous" or a "watershed in public taste", the £67m Boilerhouse extension planned for the Victoria & Albert Museum in London moved a big step nearer reality yesterday when it received the backing of English Heritage.

Daniel Libeskind's provocatively modern design now has the support of the two bodies whose opinions matter most - English Heritage, the government's statutory adviser, and the Royal Fine Art Commission, concerned primarily with architecture.

Slipped down from the mas-

sive tile-covered structure unveiled last May, the futuristic building will break the monotony of Exhibition Road, South Kensington, and provide the V&A with additional galleries, an education centre and cafés.

"Ten years ago it would have been inconceivable that a design of this originality would be applauded as widely as Daniel Libeskind's design has been," said Sir Jocelyn Stevens, chairman of English Heritage, announcing the decision. "Perhaps we are witnessing a watershed in public taste when design quality of this kind is appreciated and greeted so enthusiastically."

Alan Borg, director of the V&A, said planning permission

would probably be sought from Kensington and Chelsea council in the autumn.

But the extension, consisting of conflicting planes, has inflamed critics. Giles Worsley, editor of *Perspectives On Architecture*, called it "extremely hideous and inappropriate" - a charge rejected by Sir Jocelyn.

A survey by the museum, based on the original builder design, found public opinion divided. Of more than 1,000 people who commented during a six-week exhibition, 48 per cent said they were against the Libeskind Boilerhouse, 40 per cent were in favour and 11 per cent were in support, but with reservations.

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# Torture deaths that shame Palestine

Horrific pictures show depravity of security force interrogators

Patrick Cockburn  
Jerusalem

Just before he died, Palestinian military intelligence brought Youssef Baba to hospital in Nabulus, the biggest city on the West Bank, suffering from severe burns to his upper left arm which were clearly caused by torture.

Doctors at the Rafidiyah hospital saw the wound had become gangrenous and wanted to amputate the arm from above the elbow saying it was the only way to save Mr Baba's life. His interrogators refused to let the operation take place and took him back to their headquarters where he died on 31 January.

"He was tortured with the electric element used to boil water and was also beaten with either a stick or an electric cable," says Bassam Eid of the Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group.

Photographs of Mr Baba's body taken by his family before they buried him, and given to *The Independent*, show burns on his upper left arm and thighs as well as red marks indicating that he was whipped on the neck and shoulders.

Mr Baba was the 12th person to die in the custody of the Palestinian security forces since they began to move into Gaza and towns on the West Bank in 1994 under the terms of the Oslo accords.

Ten of the prisoners appear to have been tortured to death and two were shot dead in circumstances which are still unclear. Among the 1,200 or more prisoners held in Palestinian jails, torture has become routine.

Some of those tortured were accused of collaborating with Israel, others of belonging to Islamic militant organisations like Hamas or Islamic Jihad, but many were arrested because they had enemies in the Palestinian security forces. Military intelligence is the worst of these, says Husam Khader, a Palestinian Council member for Nabulus, who accuses them

of being involved "in car theft and other rackets".

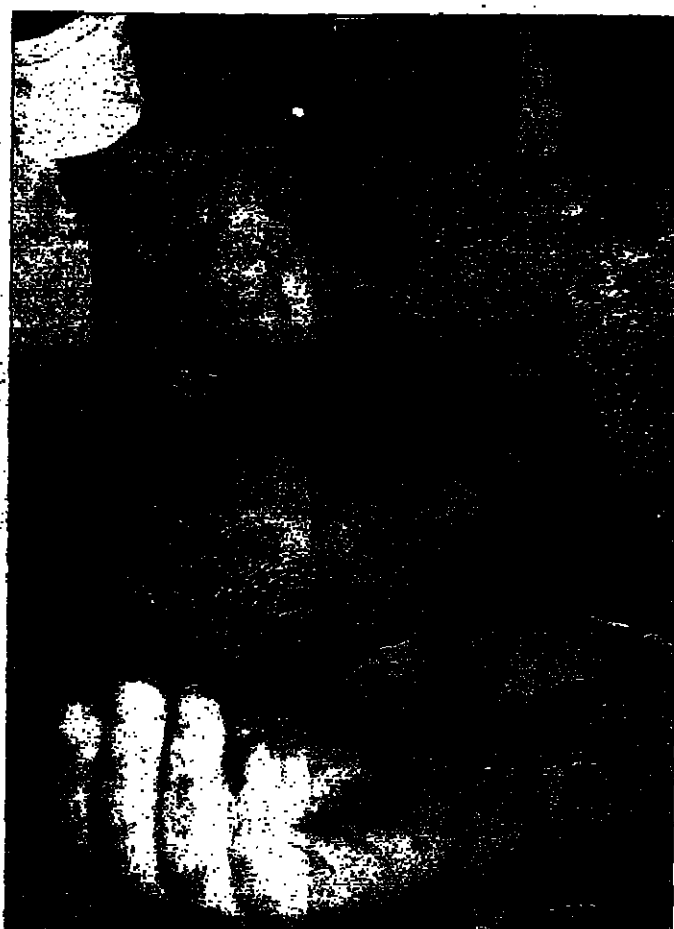
At first, the authorities in Nabulus, a town of 120,000 north of Jerusalem, tried to keep quiet about what had happened to Mr Baba. His brother Omar, who owns a photographic studio in the town, says: "The first time I knew Youssef was dead was when I heard the news on Israeli radio."

The hospital carried out an autopsy on the body, but the report disappeared. Two nurses from the hospital involved in concealing it are now under arrest.

Nevertheless the circumstances surrounding the death of Mr Baba, a 32-year-old businessman not directly involved in politics, are becoming clear. They show how ordinary Palestinians are wholly at the mercy of the security forces and have no legal recourse.

Mr Khader, who heads an investigation of the affair by the Palestinian Legislative Council, says Mr Baba was "taken to the hospital no less than five times before he died, but the doctors didn't tell anybody".

Mr Baba certainly did not expect to be arrested when he was asked to visit Mahmoud al-Ahul, the governor of Nabulus, on



might have suddenly gone away on a business trip. Then they had an anonymous telephone call saying he was in the military headquarters, a bulky brown building decorated with an enormous portrait of Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian leader, which had housed the Israeli occupation forces until the end of 1995.

There, military intelligence - headed in Nabulus by Captain Hani Ayad - told the fami-

ly to apply to the governor, who in turn sent them back to the military headquarters.

Husam Kader, for many years the leader of Fatah, Mr Arafat's political movement in Balata refugee camp on the edge of Nabulus, says that Mr Baba was first admitted to Rafidiyah hospital on 24 January because of the injuries he suffered during interrogation.

He says that six days later "the doctors suggested that they save his life by cutting off his arm, but the investigators refused". Bassam Eid confirms that he was told privately by a senior doctor at Rafidiyah that



Body of evidence: Youssef Baba's body, far left and below, shows the full extent of his injuries. Fayed al-Qumseih, left, died after allegedly being beaten with a baseball bat

the Palestinian navy. In December, in Jericho, Rashid al-Futani, accused of collaborating with Israel, was shot 13 times though police were uncertain whether he had died because he started a fight or while trying to escape.

Even while Mr Baba was being tortured in Nabulus, another prisoner of the Palestinian Authority called Fayed al-Qumseih died of a heart attack in Bethlehem on 17 January.

His son Majdi says: "They beat him with a baseball bat until he confessed."

It is probably too late to curtail the arbitrary power won by the Palestinian security services in the last two years.

The Palestinian media seldom publishes details of torture or other abuses. Protests by leaders of the four main Palestinian human rights organisations - all of whom had campaigned for years against Israeli human rights abuses - have led to their imprisonment.

And Khalid Kidreh, the Palestinian attorney general, who ordered the arrest of Captain Ayad and his interrogators for killing Mr Baba, says that he views all Palestinian human rights activists as "a fifth column".

The doctors suggested that they save his life by cutting off his arm, but the investigators refused

## Algerian rebel group claims assassination

Robert Fisk  
Middle East Correspondent

The message came from the Algerian Jihad Islamic Front - loosely associated to the banned Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) that stood to win 1992's cancelled Algerian elections - and it was as chilling as it was boastful.

"The Mujahedin in the cause of Allah in Algeria have lately executed a brilliant military operation against a notorious enemy of Islam and Muslims - the late Abdelhaq Benhamouda, a prominent Communist Union leader, killing him and his two bodyguards, praise be to Allah!"

Benhamouda, a secular enemy of Algeria's Islamist opposition, was indeed shot dead in a central Algerian square. A personal friend and adviser to President Liamine Zeroual, his assassination had originally been blamed on the more extreme Armed Islamic Group (GIA).

But Benhamouda was a political enemy of the FIS and the communists of the armed group makes no secret of its responsibility.

"The efficiency and 'professionalism' of the operation has startled the enemy," it says. "Fear has taken possession of their feelings. The junta generals and their acolytes were sobbing during Benhamouda's burial and broke into tears."

Fears, of course, have become an over-used currency in the latest stage of Algeria's war. The Muslim holy month of Ramadan - marked by a bloodbath of throat-cuttings, beheadings, car bombs and even baby-strangling - cost the lives of at least 300 people, almost all civilians, many of them women.

With the prime minister himself admitting at least 80,000 dead since 1992 - the real figure may be nearer 100,000 - President Zeroual's promise of early elections has offered little real hope of an end to the slaughter. Although legislative elections are to be held on 29 May and 5 June, the FIS will not be allowed to participate; the



President Zeroual: New offensive against Islamists

new constitution bans all parties based on religion, but those Islamic groups which support the government will be allowed to take part in the elections - under a different name.

There is no doubt that the horrors inflicted on civilians in the name of Islam are rubbing off on the FIS as well as the GIA

The president's promise to "eradicate" the armed Islamist groups has been followed by a major military offensive this week against rebels in the Tamesguida district, a wild and hilly area in the north-eastern Medea province where - if the Algerian press are to be believed - up to 60 Islamists were killed.

"self-defence" units made up of local villagers to combat the Islamists - it is principally their families who have been subjected to the wave of throat-cuttings - but this week the Algerian army was once again sent into action.

Helicopter gunships were used to fire rockets into the forests of Medea as part of the latest offensive, the first wholesale military operation since an attack on Islamists around El-Djefla two years ago. Since 24 January, 170 guerrillas have been killed, according to President Zeroual.

The FIS, however, continues to hold the authorities responsible for the slaughter in the villages south of Algiers, claiming that the GIA has been infiltrated by the Algerian intelligence services who are provoking the massacres.

The printed admission of Benhamouda's murder - in a newsletter which regularly demands the release from captivity of the three FIS leaders, Abassi Madani, Ali Belhaj and Abdelkader Hashani - says that the authorities "want us to believe that Mujahedin are only capable of mass killings, barbaric massacres: car bombing, throat-cuttings, women's breasts and the cutting of men's testicles and all sorts of body mutilations..."

"Everyone knows that these atrocious crimes are taking place in pro-Islamic areas, in El-Djefla, Medea and Algiers suburbs, against natural supporters of the Islamic Movement..."

"These crimes are the work of the secret service and the militias whose recruits are paranoid drug addicts..."

But there is no doubt from this message that the horrors inflicted on civilians in the name of Islam are rubbing off on the FIS as well as the GIA. "It is forbidden, in Islam, to kill innocents, women, children and the elderly, to mutilate or torture," the statement goes on, adding that "the Mujahedin disavowed, again and again, these unlawful and un-Islamic acts".

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## Significant Shorts

## Yeltsin sacks security service chief

Russian President Boris Yeltsin yesterday issued a decree dismissing Vasily Trofimov, deputy director of the Federal Security Service (FSB), for "gross violations in his work" as revealed by the Russian Auditing Chamber.

It was not immediately clear whether his sacking was also linked to the arrest of two FSB officers earlier this month on suspicion of large-scale drug trafficking. Helen Womack - Moscow

## Albanian anger erupts

Stones were hurled at riot police who moved in with truncheons, hitting protesters and firing volleys of live ammunition into the air, as several hundred people tried to force their way to the centre of Albania's capital, Tirana, after 7,000 people gathered at a suburban soccer field. The country has been rocked by riots since pyramid investment schemes collapsed in January, wiping out tens of thousands of people's savings across the country. Reuters - Tirana

## Diplomat to be charged

The Georgian diplomat involved in a Washington car crash that killed a girl, 16, gave himself up and is expected to be charged with involuntary manslaughter. Georgia had waived diplomatic immunity privileges for Georgy Makharadze. The case raised new outcry against diplomats who violate laws with immunity. AP - Washington

## Transvestites duped

Eight Thai transvestites are planning to sue a doctor for putting condoms filled with salt water instead of silicon implants in their breasts. The clinic in Thailand's beach resort of Pattaya where the treatment was carried out has been closed down. AP - Bangkok



Top gun: Mikhail T. Kalashnikov, inventor of the Kalashnikov AK-47 assault rifle, at a ceremony in Moscow yesterday to mark the 50th anniversary of the weapon's production. More than 70 million have been distributed worldwide. Photograph: AP

## Economic ills drive Kohl into coalition pact

Imre Karacs  
Bonn

Germany's vast economic problems have driven Helmut Kohl into the embrace of the opposition, opening the way to a grand coalition in all but name.

Under a deal to be thrashed out on Monday by Mr Kohl and Oskar Lafontaine, the leader of the Social Democrats, the biggest opposition party will co-sponsor the tax reform bill, and will be consulted on this year's spending cuts. As a consequence of their pact, Mr Kohl will no longer be able to tout the tax package as his own in next year's election campaign.

In return, the Social Democrats will be able to tilt taxation in favour of their members, and gain valuable influence in government after nearly 15 years in the political wilderness. But both sides stress that all Germans will benefit from the arrangement, because many of the urgent reforms the country needs to regain its competitiveness will be introduced in 1998, a year earlier than originally planned.

Rocked by spiralling unemployment and internal strife, the government has abruptly ditched its intransigence, and is now going out of its way to strike a meek tone in its dealings with the opposition. Wolfgang Schäuble, Mr Kohl's deputy, yesterday gave the first clear indi-

cation that the Social Democrats' vision of social justice can be accommodated.

The SPD appears willing to accept a cut in the top rate of income tax from 53 to 39 per cent, but are holding out against changes that would hit blue-collar supporters. Mr Schäuble



Helmut Kohl: Duty to lead party into next elections

suggested yesterday that he would be prepared to "compromise" over new taxes introduced for overtime and weekend work - the opposition's main bone of contention. The Social Democrats are also firmly opposed to an increase in VAT to compensate for revenue lost in the top bracket.

The government is also looking for savings of several billion deutschmarks this year in its effort to meet the Maastricht

criteria for monetary union. Though it has a comfortable enough majority in the Bundestag, many welfare cuts must be approved by the Social Democrats-controlled upper chamber, the Bundesrat. The opposition had promised a gridlock, and so far it has been true to its word.

The rapprochement over the next months will shift the thrust of government policy towards the left, outflanking Mr Kohl's right-wing junior coalition partners, the Free Democrats, who have been holding the Chancellor hostage to their *laissez-faire* agenda. Mr Kohl himself will only benefit in the long-term if he succeeds in reducing unemployment before the elections. However, Europe's longest-serving statesman is slowly reasserting himself. In recent polls, he has re-emerged as the Christian Democrat with the highest personal rating. All that is needed now is the announcement that, with the greatest reluctance, he is willing to lead his party into the next elections.

Mr Kohl had not planned to make a statement until summer, but internal unrest in the party has forced his hand. Addressing a closed meeting of Christian Democrats earlier this week, Mr Kohl gave the strongest hint yet: "I know my duty," he said at the end of an emotional speech described by the party faithful as "vintage Kohl". He received thunderous applause.

## Russia ready to lock horns with Albright

Phil Reeves  
Moscow

As Russia's leaders braced themselves to lock horns with the US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, blows began raining down on Moscow from another quarter yesterday - the republic of Ukraine.

In an interview timed to coincide with the arrival of Mrs Albright in Moscow, the Ukrainian president, Leonid Kuchma, delivered his strongest ever tirade against her neighbours. "Absolutely no one in Russia wants to understand our position, to listen to our arguments," he told Russia's *Nevskiy* newspaper.

"They make it look in Russia as if Ukraine does not exist as an independent, sovereign state," although Mr Kuchma said his criticisms were unrelated to tensions over Nato expansion, his tirade will infuriate Moscow, which has been watching with alarm as its former foe has sought closer ties with the alliance, but not membership.

Nor will Russia view kindly that Mr Kuchma - with whom it has been wrangling over the Black Sea fleet - chose to unleash such criticisms just before his talks with Mrs Albright. Fears of Russian imperialism are one of the arguments central and eastern European countries use to press for Nato admission.

Ms Albright is due to meet Mr Yeltsin later today for talks which the Russians believe have ominous historical implications. In her noisy, some would say Napoleonic, route march towards Moscow, she has been scattering incentives like confetti - including a Nato-Russian brigade, a Nato-Russian consultative council, and amendments to the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) treaty.

But there has been little hint of a willingness to move in key areas. Nato is unlikely to agree to Russia's demand for a legally binding agreement governing their relationship. Moscow is, Western sources say, doomed to make little headway should it press for a pledge from the alliance not eventually to admit the Baltics - a potential flash-point in East-West relations.

Despite this, the alliance is making little secret that it is unlikely to admit Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania as full members, because of Russia's huge stake in the region. Ironically, Russia's nagging border disputes with the Baltics will help Nato to justify denying them admission.

Ms Albright, who marched off her aeroplane last night wearing a black cowboy-style hat, will need all the swashbuckling she can muster. Her hosts regard her mission with an iciness that is somewhat colder than the sub-zero tempera-

tures - as Klaus Kinkel, the German Foreign Minister, found out. He left Moscow this week complaining that he had met universal opposition.

This is partly because Russian outrage over Nato expansion has now risen from a rumbling to a roar, not least because of the alliance's inept conduct over the last few weeks - particularly, an ill-timed visit by Nato's Secretary General Javier Solana to ex-Soviet republics on Russia's southern flank.

Whether Ms Albright fares any better than her German counterpart remains to be seen. The Russians regard her with a mixture of suspicion, because they fear her Czech background may make her anti-Russian, and guarded awe, because she

Vienna (Reuters) - Nato put forward a proposal at conventional arms reduction talks in Vienna aimed at sweetening the alliance's planned eastward expansion for Russia. Officials say the new conventional arms reduction proposal, which modifies the 1990 Conventional Forces in Europe treaty, should go a long way to calming Moscow's fears that Nato could pile up weapons on Russia's borders.

The Americans say the proposed modification of CFE, amounts to a legally binding document.

is a woman operating in a predominantly male world, not unlike Margaret Thatcher - whom many Russians admired. Her dealings with Yevgeny Primakov, Russia's Foreign Minister, are certain to be tense, but they can hardly be worse than his relationship with her predecessor, Warren Christopher. Diplomatic sources say the two men loathed one another.

She arrives knowing that Moscow has few political cards to play. It does, however, have a moral argument or two. Chief among these is the view that Nato is rushing towards expansion purely to satisfy its own political ends, regardless of the consequences.

The argument runs thus: the alliance has to grow to survive as a post-Cold War institution; it has bowed to pressure from the US, which knows there are domestic points to be scored (there is a large Polish vote), and from central and eastern European nations, which are using Nato membership as a staging post for entry to the EU.

But should these considerations outweigh the damage that Nato expansion might cause in an ailing and unstable nuclear power which is humiliated by its Cold War defeat, and still trying to turn itself into a democracy? The Russians say: no.

## SA steps in to host peace talks for Zaire

Mary Braid  
Johannesburg

The Zairean government and the Rwandan-backed rebels who have captured a swath of eastern Zaire seem to be on the brink of their first face-to-face peace talks in Cape Town.

Speculation that the talks were already underway reached fever pitch yesterday after President Nelson Mandela said an aircraft was ready to fly the rebel leader Laurent Kabila to South Africa for talks with the nephew and chief military adviser of Mobutu Sese Seko, the ailing Zairean President.

Mr Mandela said South Africa was merely a host for the "good" initiative launched by Yoweri Museveni, President of Uganda, the neighbour Zaire accuses of backing the rebels.

South African military sources claimed that Mr Kabila landed early yesterday. The United States embassy confirmed that officials were in Cape Town to bolster the peace process.

By yesterday afternoon, however, a news blackout was in place. Rusty Evans, South Africa's director-general of foreign affairs, retracted earlier confirmations that Mr Kabila was in town. "There is a great reluctance on both sides to acknowledge that they are willing to negotiate," he said.

The Zairean government insists that it will not enter into peace talks before foreign troops have been withdrawn from its territory. Yesterday, it reiterated that position following the departure of four foreign ministers on a separate diplomatic mission to Kinshasa. A few hours later it announced fresh attacks on rebel positions.

The Zaireans talk tough but their counter-offensive launched last month has failed. And while Mr Kabila's vow to be in Kinshasa by last Christmas was over-optimistic, the rebels have made greater progress than anyone predicted.

Yesterday a spokesman for South Africa's Deputy President, Thabo Mbeki, denied that he had been involved in talks with Zaireans. But another government source said he was laying the foundations for an imminent meeting. In Kinshasa, Léon Kengo Wa Dondo, the Zairean Prime Minister, claimed he knew nothing about the Cape Town meeting.

Last Tuesday, the United Nations approved a five-point plan to end the conflict which threatens to engulf the entire Great Lakes region. But an African-brokered peace would be seen as a coup for the continent, and for South Africa in particular.

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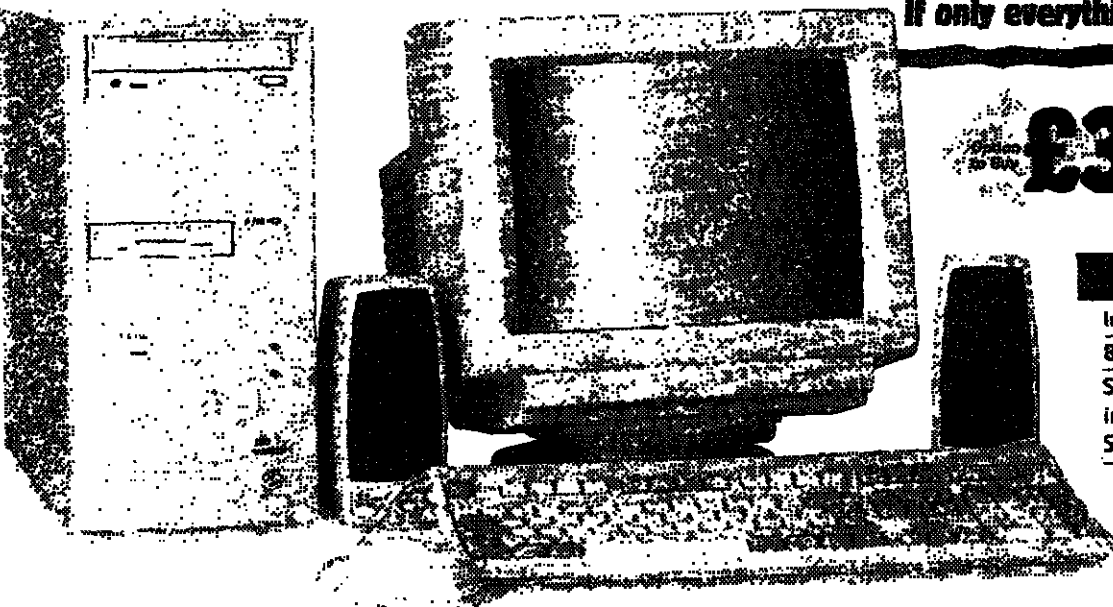
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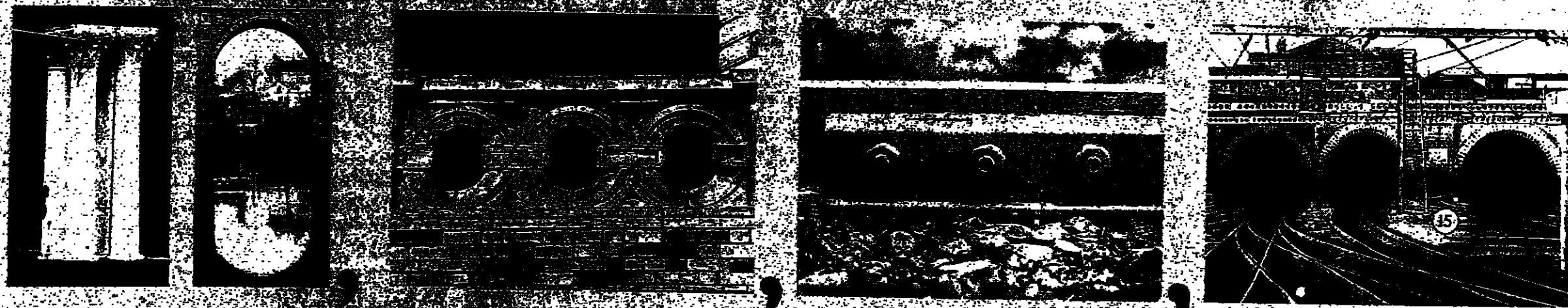


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## AFTER DENG

# Battle for power looms as Chinese

## Calm markets help confound dire warnings

Stephen Vines

Confident predictions about an outbreak of jitters in Hong Kong following Deng Xiaoping's death were confounded yesterday.

The mood of calm was reinforced by Tung Chee-hwa, the head of the first post-colonial government, announcing that all serving heads of Civil Service departments would be able to keep their jobs following the handover of power in July.

Mr Tung said this would "ensure a very large measure of continuity... which will help maintain the stability of Hong Kong".

Most surprisingly, the normally volatile and notoriously jittery stock exchange, a reliable indicator of public opinion, shot up after a faltering start. Analysts had confidently predicted that the market would fall by 500 to 1,000 points. In the event, the leading Hang Seng Index rose 305 points, a gain of more than 2 per cent, as almost £1bn changed hands in a day of hectic trading.

Stockbrokers said Deng's demise had been long expected and investors were waiting on the sidelines to pour money into shares once the paramount leader's fate had been sealed. There were also suggestions that China's supporters had joined the buying spree to convey an impression of confidence.

Investors' views seemed to be shared by most people in Hong Kong. "We've been expecting Deng to pass away for some time," Li Fu, a garage owner, said. "We are well prepared for this." Nevertheless, newspaper sales soared by 50 per cent yesterday and the television and radio stations gave blanket coverage to Deng's death. Most schools held special ceremonies

and explained to pupils the implications of the Chinese leader's demise.

Deng's death even broke the ice between the Governor, Chris Patten, and Chinese officials in the territory. Mr Patten was admitted for the first time to the headquarters of Peking's *de facto* embassy in the colony to pay his respects and make the customary three bows before Deng's portrait.

Most local politicians stressed that the paramount leader's death would do nothing to change China's policy nor to create instability as the result of a power struggle in Peking. However, Martin Lee, leader of the Democratic Party, speaking from London, said he feared there may be some changes for the worse as the new leadership opted for rigidly conservative policies because of their insecurity.

An indication of the degree to which Hong Kong remains in the minds of the Chinese leadership was provided by the appointment of Mr Tung and two Hong Kong tycoons, TK Ann and Henry Fok, to the 459-strong important funeral committee which will preside over arrangements for Deng's burial.

Mr Tung was in the Chinese capital when Deng died. He was seeking approval for his plans to reappoint all the principal officials serving the current administration. Only two new appointments were made to replace retiring officials.

The new attorney-general, now to be known as the secretary for justice, will be 57-year-old Elsie Leung, a well-known China-supporting solicitor and member of China's National People's Congress, the rubber-stamp parliament. Fears have been expressed that she might politicise the post.



Hiatus: A cleaner sweeping a Hong Kong street yesterday as sales of newspapers announcing Deng's death soared by 50 per cent. Photograph: Jason Reed/Reuters

## Death of chief protector leaves Hong Kong uneasy

Stephen Vines  
Hong Kong

It is hard to exaggerate the extent to which Deng Xiaoping was personally responsible both for sealing the fate of Hong Kong's political future and for creating the conditions under which the territory has enjoyed an extraordinary period of economic prosperity.

According to the official version of events, Deng turned his attention to the future of Hong Kong in 1978. The Communist Party's Central Committee was preparing its radical programme of economic reform, the scheme for so-called "socialist modernisation", and was devising ways of "achieving the reunification of the motherland".

Deng Xiaoping knew that China would never achieve modernisation without help from overseas Chinese compatriots, especially those in Hong Kong. It had long served as China's economic window on the world. Now Hong Kong was to become more than a mere entrepôt; it was to provide both the capital and know-how needed to breathe new life into the elephantine Chinese economy.

Deng was also aware that China had the opportunity to realise its historic dream of recovering sovereignty over Hong Kong. The humiliating treaty which ceded a part of the Chinese mainland for a period of 99 years was due to expire in 1997. Hong Kong island itself had been ceded in perpetuity back in 1842, but it was clear that the island could not survive without the mainland territory.

Deeply conscious of Chinese history and his place in it, Deng Xiaoping made it a priority to expunge the disgrace of foreign occupation of Chinese soil. He was not going to be another Li Hongzhang, the Qing dynasty official who signed the treaty handing over Hong Kong to the British. As he told Margaret

Stephen Vines reviews Deng's crucial role in the colony's economic boom

Thatcher in 1982 "no Chinese leader or government would be able to justify themselves" for failing to secure the return of the territory. "It would mean the present Chinese government was just like the government of the late Qing Dynasty". However, Deng knew it would not be enough to satisfy Chinese national pride; fears of the Hong Kong people also needed to be allayed. More important was to reassure the people of Taiwan, occupied by the anti-Communist Nationalist gov-

ernment, which he also wanted returned to the Chinese fold. To do so, he developed the "one country, two systems" concept under which, according to Deng, "the main part of China must maintain socialism, but a capitalist system will be allowed to exist in certain areas, such as Hong Kong and Taiwan". Capitalist influences would also be allowed in to "supplement the socialist economy".

This was the genesis of both the idea that Hong Kong could remain capitalist, albeit under the sovereignty of a Communist state, and that other cities, notably in the south, would be allowed to develop along capitalist lines, providing a spur to the rest of the economy.

The breathtaking economic development of the southern parts of the country, aided by Hong Kong and Taiwanese entrepreneurs, succeeded beyond Deng's wildest dreams. Using freedoms carved out by Deng and expanding on them, the new entrepreneurs virtually junked the entire state-controlled economy. Hong Kong, now firmly connected to the powerhouse of economic growth in China, leapt into an era of double-digit economic growth and general prosperity. Hong Kong businessmen were ready to defy the name of Deng Xiaoping.

Deng had previously indicated that he did not favour any form of full-scale democracy for Hong Kong and even spoke of the need for the Chinese government to intervene in the colony if instability broke out. As Deng grew older and worrying reports about his health filled the pages of the local press, there was much talk about how Hong Kong would manage after the great man died. The stock market gyrated in tune with the optimistic and pessimistic reports of his health. But his end was a long time coming, and the jitters gave way to what stockbrokers called a "discounting of the Deng factor".

Nevertheless, it remains hard to dispel fears over the uncertainty produced by Deng's death. Although Tiananmen severely dented his image, Deng retained the status of "Hong Kong's protector". No one else has stepped in to fill this role. With just four months until Deng's dream is realised and the colony reverts to China, the lack of a protector makes Hong Kong people uneasy.

Leading article, page 15

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150 من الاصل



AFTER DENG

# pay tribute to the great manipulator

## Low-key funeral planned without foreign leaders

**China fact-file**

- Mainland China has a population of 1.202,900,000 (1.2 billion), the highest in the world, and about three times that of the European Union.
- China's annual economic output (gross national product, or GNP) is about \$650bn (£391bn). That makes its economy in dollar terms worth less than that of Britain.
- Only about a fifth of the population lives in cities. Around 800 million of the population are peasants.
- Per capita GNP has increased from \$280 in 1980 to \$550 in 1994. The richest 20 per cent of the population earns 60 times what the poorest earns.
- There were about 650,000 private firms in China, employing 8.22 million people, at the end of 1995. By 2000, private business is expected to account for about 20 per cent of output.
- Just under a quarter of the world's televisions are made in China.
- There are about 3 million people in the Chinese armed forces, slightly less than the population of Ireland.
- China borders 14 other countries. Its longest is 13,759 miles long.
- China has an area of 3,705,408 square miles, 3.4 times the size of Belgium.
- The official language of China is Mandarin, spoken by 70 per cent of the population.



Paying respect: A soldier of the People's Liberation Army saluting towards a flag flying at half-mast yesterday in Tiananmen Square, Peking, in honour of the death on Wednesday of China's leader Deng Xiaoping, aged 92

**Ted Plafker**  
Peking

The funeral committee charged with arranging the funeral of Deng Xiaoping declared a six-day period of mourning yesterday. It said a memorial meeting, attended by 10,000 people, would be held on Tuesday at the Great Hall of the People. Deng's ashes will be scattered rather than saved, and foreign leaders will not attend his funeral.

The committee released a letter which Deng's widow, Zhuo Lin, and his five children sent to Jiang Zemin. "The last thing that we do for Comrade Xiaoping should embody his spirit and character, and our grief should be expressed in the simplest, most sincere way," the letter said. The family noted Deng's request that his organs be used for research and his eyes for transplant.

What strikes many Peking residents today as unimaginable is the notion that Deng's passing will lead to turmoil, demonstrations, or any sort of open power struggle.

"Deng's death will not have the slightest impact. Jiang Zemin already has everything arranged, and nobody is about to start a protest. What would they protest about? Just to make a fuss? Nothing will happen," predicted a Peking resident in his 40s.

Indeed, by the end of the day, there was little to suggest that Jiang Zemin's careful arrangements were in immediate danger of unravelling. In what China's paranoid security forces must consider fortuitous timing, students at Peking's historically volatile universities are on holiday until Monday.

Still, police are taking nothing for granted. One student who has spent the holiday on campus at Peking University said a police acquaintance sought to question him yesterday about any actions being planned by students for next week when school resumes.

On the Avenue of Eternal Peace, technicians could be seen tending to a surveillance camera, perhaps hoping to ensure that the thoroughfare lives up to its name.

## Journey for peace that began with a secret mission to Peking

Rupert Cornwall hears of the softly softly approach that brought China out of diplomatic isolation

Washington — For a young East Asia specialist at the National Security Council, it was the journey of a lifetime. In the 22 years since the Communist revolution of 1949, no American had officially visited China.

No diplomatic ties existed between the countries, just intermittent embassy-level contacts in places like Warsaw and Geneva — until Winston Lord found himself on a Pakistani aircraft in July 1971, accompanying his boss, Henry Kissinger, on a super-secret trip to Peking.

The China visit everyone remembers today is President Nixon's "Journey for Peace" that began 25 years ago today. But that truly historic encounter

would have been impossible without the Kissinger mission, born of the interest of Washington and Peking in thwarting the ambitions of their common rival, the Soviet Union. The tectonic plates of global diplomacy moved as a result.

"It was very dramatic, flying past the Himalayas and K-2, then arriving in Peking in the middle of the night," Mr Lord said. "As we approached Chinese airspace I went to the front of the plane so I could claim to be the first American official into Chinese territory since the revolution." Heavy, of course,

was first off the plane when we landed. For some reason, he hadn't taken enough shirts, and was ranting and raving about it. Eventually he borrowed one, but it was too big and had the label 'made in Taiwan'. I remember making a joke to Henry about it. "You've lost your shirt to the Chinese already."

The summit six months later needed little such improvisation. Its rationale was obvious. "Clearly the Communist world was no longer to be seen as a single bloc. Relations with China, we reckoned, would give us leverage with the Soviet Union

— and they did. Within months, even weeks, relations with Moscow improved greatly. We also hoped to use Russian and Chinese influence to end the war in Vietnam," Mr Lord said.

And even deeper considerations weighed too. "We knew that at some point a country with a quarter of the world's population was going to matter. There were things in it for both sides. China was vulnerable then ... Ties with us would help them break their isolation, build contacts with Japan and get them into the UN."

Even though China and the

US did not exchange ambassadors until 1979, the summit in effect codified Sino-American relations. Its main fruit was the document known as the "Shanghai Communiqué".

It began with a long section setting out the countries' differing views on major issues. "The Chinese wanted this," Mr Lord said. "They argued that if we made clear our disagreements, it would make the rest of the communiqué more credible. And 25 years later, it is still constantly referred to, as the bedrock document between us."

For Richard Nixon, it was the

crowning moment of a presidency that 30 months later would end in disgrace.

Much has changed in the quarter century since, during which Mr Lord served as US Ambassador to Peking from 1985 to 1989, and as Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian affairs during President Clinton's first term. "For one thing the Chinese are much stronger. The economy is surging, they are a growing military power. The leadership context is different too ... Today it's more of a collective leadership. Jiang Zemin is in charge, but

clearly there's less flexibility. They have to work out a consensus which makes things more difficult, and after Deng's death there's bound to be jockeying ..."

But Mr Lord argues that in their different ways, both sides need each other. "We account for one-third of Chinese exports, they have a \$40bn trade surplus with us and they want access to US technology. Also despite Taiwan, Hong Kong, human rights, arms and nuclear sales, and all the rest, the American presence in East Asia not entirely unwelcome to them, if only as a balancing force against any resurgence in Japanese militarism."



Henry Kissinger: Went on secret mission to Peking

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# Leo Rosten

## The Vizier of Sokoto

## Stan Pearson

# Iris Freeman

**Births,  
Marriages  
& Deaths**

## BIRTHS

## Birthdays

Turner-Warwick, surgeon and urologist. 72; Professor Leslie Wagner, Principal and Chief Executive, Leeds Metropolitan University. 54; Mr David Wood, actor and playwright. 53.

## Anniversaries

**Birthing:** John Henry Newman, Cardinal, 1801; Wystan Hugh Auden, poet, 1907; Douglas Bader, fighter pilot, 1910. **Deaths:** Baruch Spinoza, philosopher, 1677; Jethro Till, agricultural writer, 1741; Howard Walter Florey, Baron Florey, pathologist, 1968. On this day: the *New Statesman* was founded, 1931; identity cards were abolished in Britain, 1952. **Today is the Feast Day of St George of Amasris, St Germanus of Granfel, St Peter Damian, St Robert Southwell and St Severian of Scythopolis.**

## Synagogue services

Details of synagogue services to be held tomorrow may be obtained by telephoning the following. Sabbath begins in London at 5.11pm.

**United Synagogues:** 0181-343 8989.  
**Federation of Synagogues:** 0181-202 2263. **Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues:** 0171-580 1663. **Reform Synagogues of Great Britain:** 0181-349 4731. **Spanish and Portuguese Jews Congregation:** 0171-239 2573. **New London Synagogue (Masorti):** 0171-328

## Strike-out

Whitehead v Avon District Coun-

Master of the Rolls, Lord Justice  
Thorne, Lord Justice Waller)

Where proceedings were stayed by order of the court, the provisions of Order 17, rule 11(9), automatically striking out the action if no request for a hearing date were made within 15 months of the close of pleadings, ceased to apply unless expressly preserved by the order.

The Court of Appeal dismissed an appeal by the defendant, Avon County Council, against the decision of Judge Batterbury, sitting in Bath County Court on 24 March 1995, that an action by the plaintiff, Cynthia Whitehead, had not been struck out automatically under rule Order 17, rule 11(9).

The plaintiff's action was for damages for injuries to her back. Pleadings closed on 22 April 1992 and the 15-month

provision d

period under Order 17, rule 11(9), was to have expired on 22/9/1993. But the time for requesting a hearing date was extended by the court until 30 September 1993, thus postponing the "guillotine date" to 30 June 1994. Then in September 1993 the proceedings were stayed pending examination of the plaintiff by the defendant's psychiatrist. The plaintiff appealed against the order because she wished to have a companion present when examined. The judge rejected her appeal and she appealed to the Court of Appeal but no appeal had been heard before 30 June 1994.

In January 1995 the defendant sought a declaration that the action had been automatically struck out. It contended that although a stay imposed a

did not apply  
LAW REPORT

21 February 1997

procedural bar on the taking of further steps in the action, the action still subsisted and rule 11(9) had the effect of automatically striking out the proceedings when the guillotine period expired. Alternatively, if the plaintiff was prevented from requesting a hearing date while the action was stayed, she could still apply for an extension of time for making such a request, in order to keep the action alive, and since she failed to do so, it was automatically struck out under the rule.

*Andrew Colledge QC and Christopher Russell (Cryer-Bristow, for Bennett Metcalfe, Bristol), for the defendants; Edwin Glasgow QC and Peter Langford (Campbell Hooper, for Faulkners, for the plaintiff).*

Lord Justice Waller said the question was one of construction

to stayed pr

1. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 1997; 277: 1039-1043.

tion of the particular order, in the context of the facts of the case, and of the rules. The philosophy of the rules appeared from Order 17, rule 11(2)(b) to be that the automatic directions were to have effect "subject to any directions by the court".

In construing the rules, the court would bear in mind that their aim was to take matters out of the parties' hands so far as time-keeping was concerned, because, as the Master of the Rolls said in *Downer & Lidd Ltd v Brough* [1996] 1 WLR 575 at 582, they "cannot be relied on to act with expedition". But as *Downer* showed, (a) if orders were inconsistent with the automatic directions, those directions might well cease to have effect, and (b) the aim of the rules could also be

**proceedings**  
making appropriate orders.

such as Order 17, rule 11(4) in

the background it was critically important, where the court made an order outside the automatic directions, that the parties be clear as to whether the draconian rule applied or not.

If the order specified a time, or the operation of the rule, the imposition of a stay could not prevent an application to extend such time.

Where the court made an order staying proceedings without words in the order preserving the date by which the plaintiff was obliged and able to request a hearing, an order for a stay was inconsistent with the automatic directions. It followed that on the proper construction of the rules and on the authority of *Downer* the automatic directions ceased to apply; therefore rule 1.1(9) must also cease to apply.

هكذا من الراحين



# For Hong Kong the uncertainty lives on

So Deng is dead. For many, the more newsworthy headline yesterday might have been: "Deng has been alive for the past six years". It seems the Chinese government had made contingency plans and that the death of their 92-year-old paramount leader failed to take them by surprise. So it is safe to assume that little will change as a result.

Nevertheless, this is a moment for us to pause and consider the future for the most populous nation on earth. For there is an important item of unfinished business that we have with China—the hand-over of Hong Kong, which is to be concluded in three months' time; and much about the future of the colony is still unknown.

Of course we do not presume to tell the Chinese government what to do. We hold back from declaring democratic capitalism to be a global value system, and urging the conversion of a quarter of the world's population to the virtues of Coca-Cola and high energy consumption. Human rights, on the other hand, are global values and we will continue to lecture the Chinese authorities about them. But on Hong Kong our appeal is primarily to their self-interest.

Deng was the intellectual and political father of the arrangement for

transferring Hong Kong back to China. "One country, two systems", which will preserve Hong Kong's capitalist system and a degree of autonomy for 50 years, was his ingenious fix to assure the residents of the colony that their future was not in doubt. Deng was always described as a pragmatist.

But Deng will also be remembered in Hong Kong as the man who sent the tanks into Tiananmen Square, ending any hope that China could in the short term have a peaceful transition to democracy. Neither Hong Kong nor China itself have yet been reconciled to these events. Deng's death may begin the process, but as yet everyone is still tip-toeing around the issue. This week, the best that the normally outspoken Madeleine Albright could manage was to talk of the Tiananmen Square "actions" as "troublesome".

There were hopeful signs from Hong Kong yesterday that the spirit of pragmatism will be what survives Deng. Governor Chris Patten went to the *de facto* embassy of China in the colony to pay his respects. It is the first time that Mr Patten, regarded by the Chinese leadership as the whore of the East, has been permitted to enter this inner sanctum. The first

aircraft (a test flight) landed at Hong Kong's new airport, which was once the most concrete sign of the violent disagreements between London and Peking. And Tung Chee-hwa, who will take over from Mr Patten as chief executive of Hong Kong, announced that the civil service heads of department will all be staying on, guaranteeing continuity.

So far, so good. But there are several months to go before the transfer of power, and the party congress to decide on the new Chinese leadership will not be before

October. Between now and then, a great deal will happen in both Hong Kong and China that could be far more destabilising than the widely predicted death of Deng.

It may be that now that Deng is dead, the new leadership—perhaps more coherent, more sure of itself—can consolidate reform, and in the process take a more emollient view of Hong Kong. But there is just as big a possibility that Hong Kong will become a political football in the succession struggle. Though the paramountcy of Jiang Zemin is assured,

there could still be much jostling lower down the chain of command.

There is a debate about China's own future that could be played out over Hong Kong. The idea of "socialism with Chinese characteristics"—China's unique fusion of capitalism and socialism—is still an unstable mix that could be explosive.

Hong Kong needs to know that it will remain a place where the rule of law operates. That means that government as well as citizens are subject to law, and that the civil rights won under British rule will not be undermined.

Hong Kong is important to China's self-interest as the main junction box between mainland China and the world. The rest of the world is watching: the United States, in particular, has made a point of saying that it will regard human rights in Hong Kong as a benchmark for relations between Washington and Peking. Ms Albright will not always be as tactful.

Then there is Taiwan to consider, another appeal to China's perception of its own interests: if Hong Kong can be shown to operate successfully under the "one country, two systems" label, then the same principle may eventually be transferable across the Taiwan strait.

When Deng saw Lord MacLehose back in 1978 to discuss the hand-over of power, he told the then-governor to return to the people of Hong Kong and "put their hearts at ease". Jiang Zemin and the others who will supervise the transfer of power in Hong Kong should take heed of this injunction.

## Savaging the Euro-sceptics

"Come on in, Sir Geoffrey's on the sparkling form tonight," was the famous entry for a *New Statesman* competition which asked for words to chill the heart on arrival at a party. But Sir Geoffrey, now Lord Howe, was indeed on sparkling form yesterday, suggesting that he might not vote Tory if there was much more of this Euro-sceptic nonsense.

Leave aside the fact that, as a peer, he doesn't have a vote. Once the architect of monetarism, then a dead sheep, Lord Howe has completed another metamorphosis into the sort of principled pro-European we want to support. A welcome guest indeed.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Ms S: the need for help and sympathy

Sir: In November 1982, I was threatened with the same treatment as Ms S (leading article, 19 February), because my child was in the breech position. I was so frightened I left the country in order to give birth naturally, without any drugs and without being cut open. I had a wonderful, relatively pain-free birth and my daughter is now 14 years old and doing well.

As a mental health social worker, approved by the local authority, I knew exactly what doctors could do. Hence my flight.

Ms S has my fullest sympathy. Before her ordeal I am sure she was "in full possession of her senses"—by the time this saga is settled and over she may well be in need of the mental health services. Giving birth is stressful enough, but to have to contend with the full weight and wrath of the medical profession as well is enough to make any sane woman become ill. Ms S will need all the help and support we can give her. **MARY JEAN BOWLES** *London SE8*

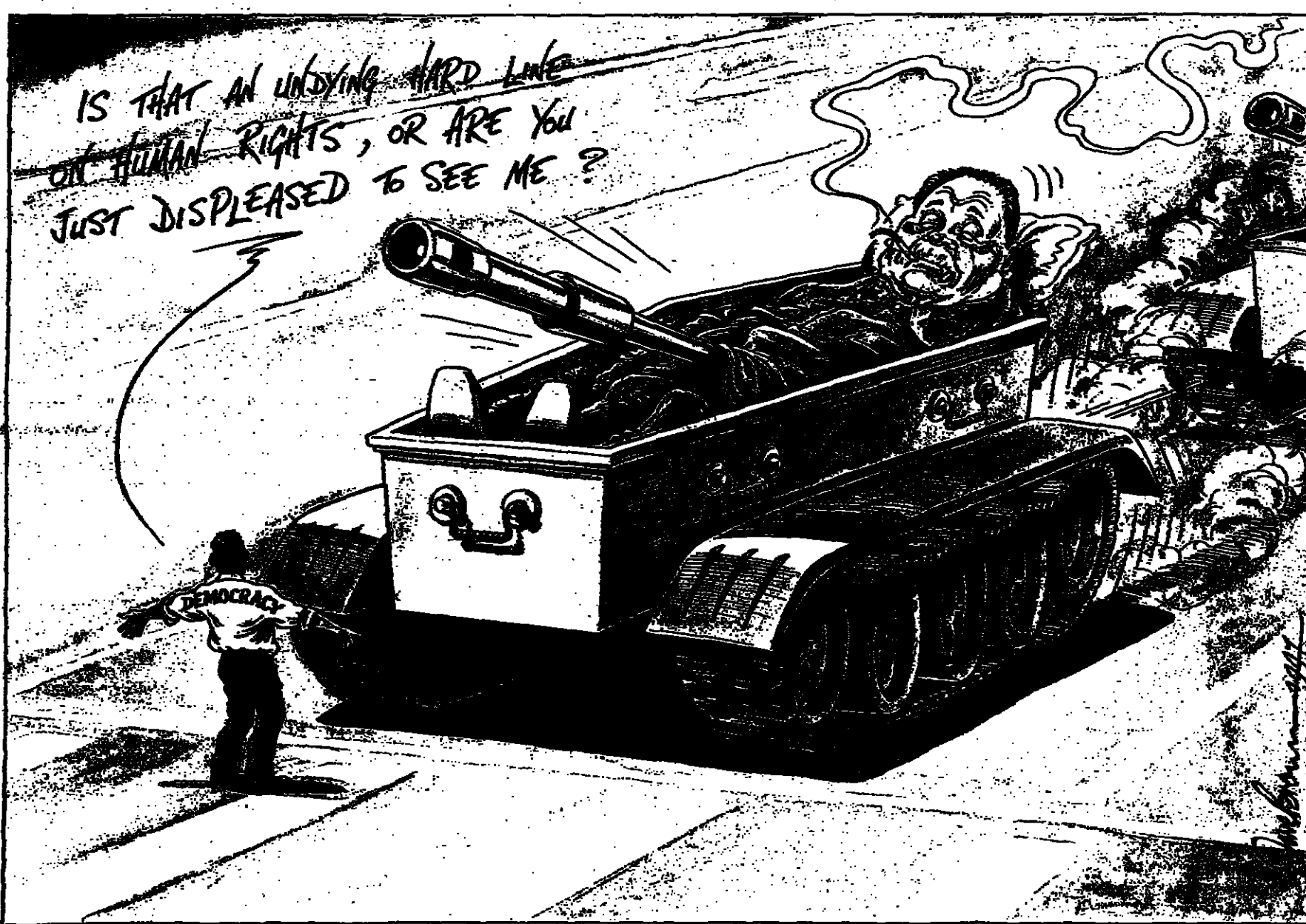
Sir: The purpose of the Mental Health Act is the compulsory treatment of mental disorder. To what extent can a Caesarean section be considered treatment for a mental disorder? In the case of *Tameside and Glossop Acute Services Trust v CH*, 22 January 1996, Mr Justice Wall confirmed that, on the particular facts, a Caesarean section was treatment for the mental disorder suffered and could, therefore, be carried out without the consent of the patient, under the statutory authority of section 63.

This approach can be contrasted with the case of C, who was detained under the Mental Health Act suffering from schizophrenia, but who was entitled to withhold consent to an operation to amputate his gangrenous leg. In that case there was deemed to be no connection between the mental disorder suffered and the physical disorder of gangrene and the court upheld the patient's right to make a decision which might lead to his death.

Your article is right to question whether refusing treatment in these circumstances is evidence of mental disorder, equally worrying from a civil rights perspective is whether the treatment authorised by section 63 of the Mental Health Act can consist of intervention of what appears to be a purely physical nature. **STEPHEN JONES** *Senior Lecturer Liverpool John Moores University*

Sir: It is well established that a person cannot be forced to undergo medical treatment for the benefit of another. So, for example, a father cannot be compelled to donate his bone-marrow to benefit his child, even if without it the child will almost certainly die.

One then comes to consider the case of a pregnant woman refusing medical treatment, which refusal will result in the death of her unborn child as well as her own. Putting aside the rather vexed question of whether the rights of men to refuse medical treatment are greater than the rights accorded to women in these circumstances, and the clear but difficult conflict between the rights



of a woman and her unborn child, can it really be suggested that the rights of a foetus are greater than those of a child with a life-threatening but curable medical complaint? **HEATHER LAWRENCE** *Gray's Inn London WC1*

### Reform that is long overdue

Sir: Andrew Marr ("The voices that may dash all hopes of reform", 19 February) illustrates why the debate about how we govern ourselves must not be left to politicians. They are—understandably, under our electoral system—preoccupied during the pre-election period with the need to impress focus groups, win over floating voters, and court the media.

Yet surveys such as the State of the Nation poll, carried out by ICM for the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust, show that public support for democratic reform is strong. People's confidence in politicians has plummeted. They want to have more of a say in decisions which affect their lives—to feel that their opinions matter more often than every five years. This means a more open and accountable government, power decentralised from Westminster, and protection for our rights in law, as well as a proportional voting system.

It is vital that there is an opportunity for the public to debate these issues with their politicians, and we hope that Charter 88's Democracy Day

meetings, held just before polling day, will provide this. They could also demonstrate to the Labour Party—which can seem strangely unenthusiastic about reform—that in the voters' eyes their proposals are more than just welcome. They are long overdue. **ANDREW PUDDIPHATT** *Director, Charter 88 London EC1*

### Give patients a choice of hospital

Sir: Doctors Mark Monaghan and David Jewitt (letter, 18 February) suggest that patients on waiting lists at one hospital should be referred to another where the waiting list is shorter. There are many reasons why some hospitals have shorter waiting lists than others, the most common of which is that patients do not want to be treated there.

Therefore, the suggestion made cannot be good for patient care as it removes the right of the patient and their GP to choose which hospital to go to for treatment. Surely it is more logical to provide funds for the patients to be treated at their chosen hospital? **Dr C BUCKNALL** *Consultant Cardiologist & Clinical Director Mr R SMITH Cardio-Thoracic Centre Guy's & St Thomas' Hospital London SE1*

### Politics of social worker bashing

Sir: It is both unfair and misleading of the Government to play politics with the professional reputation of social work ("Major must be in a fix if it's political correctness again", 18 February). John Major's recent comments about "politically correct social workers" only show that the Government is so desperate to find a scapegoat that it will happily resort to meaningless clichés.

Social work must be open to rigorous scrutiny, a fact nobody in the profession would dispute. Indeed the concept of a regulation and registration council for social work has widespread support within the profession but the Government is not prepared to take this obvious step to protect the public.

The changes to adoption introduced by the Health Secretary, Stephen Dorrell, have found much support within social services and are nothing radical—so why cloak them in rhetoric which only drives a wedge between social workers and the families who need their help?

A recent public opinion poll conducted by NOP for *Community Care*, found that more than half of the public disagreed with the notion that social workers are an "unnecessary interference" in people's lives. The poll also found that three-quarters were opposed to social services being run by private

companies and charities, rather than by local government.

So perhaps ministers are wrong in thinking that there are votes in tired social worker bashing and extending privatisation to services for society's most vulnerable and marginalised people, where consumer choice will never be a reality. **TERKY PHILPOT** *Editor Community Care Sutton, Surrey*

### The myth behind British invention

Sir: Peter Popham's article ("It's all make-believe", 18 February) raises important questions. British engineering, design and manufacture has been in relative decline for a century and a half and for much of that time we have applauded invention. We associate the great engineers with invention: Watt with the separate condenser, Stephenson with the steam locomotive, Parsons with the turbine. Whistle with the gas turbine. Somehow the myth has been generated that the British are especially inventive; then it is believed that the British engineer invents world-beating products but only foreign companies profit by them.

This self-deception would be no more than a charming example of chauvinism, were it not associated with a complete misunderstanding of what design is all about. Design is not merely invention, it is getting

a useful product right. More important than invention is the disciplined decision-making needed to solve the thousands of problems that arise between the conception of the design brief and the delivery to the customer of a product which is profitable to own and profitable to make. **D J LEECH** *Swansea*

### Arachnophobia and the dinosaurs

Sir: To your seven theories about extinction of the dinosaurs ("The day the dinosaurs died", 18 February), may I add an eighth? The later dinosaurs had to share the world with the early ancestors of today's mammals—small and agile creatures—scurrying round their feet. Bearing in mind the attitude of many people to our present domestic livestock, mice and spiders (small and agile), I think the poor old reptiles simply died of fright. **The Rev EDDIE TAYLOR** *Haworth, West Yorkshire*

### Car-free Camden?

Sir: What a trendy, innovative idea of Camden's to create car-free estates ("So you want to live here? Then we won't let you buy your own car", 15 February). Does this mean that Camden councillors and employees will be selling their cars and closing their own car parks, or is it one law for the Camden commissars and one for the rest of us? **A KERSTEIN** *Ilford, Essex*

### Democracy the Swampy way

Sir: Swampy is not, as Norman Webb argues (Letters, 19 February), against democracy. He has simply noticed that in one important field, road-building, it does not operate.

Any consultation about new roads begins only after the decision to build has been made. The dice are loaded from the start. The whole apparatus of spin doctors, PR consultants and glossy brochures is wheeled in to comfort a local population whose chief interest is to take the horrible noise and pollution into somebody else's backyard.

Objectors cannot match the resources that the Department of Transport can deploy, not least because the latter charges for access to its documents. Expensive QC's are on hand to clobber into the ground any witnesses on the side of doubt. The Highways Agency which steers the scheme is a quango. The inquiry which follows is a piece of theatre which the public can witness but not influence.

Our son lived for more than two years in the magnificent old oak at Fairmile, which was demolished so casually in the view of millions of television viewers earlier this month. He would like the "strong institutions which thwart corruption" that Mr Webb finds praiseworthy. What he gets are political leaders focused on the voters of about 100 marginal constituencies, who will determine the outcome of the next general election. He sees greed, selfishness, narrow-mindedness, blinkered vision and political cowardice, and has turned away. He takes no financial benefits from this society, other than what his parents earn. The meagre benefits we provide as taxpayers to his colleagues are a good deal less than those taken from us by the DoT's lawyers. His and Swampy's moral base, it seems to us, is secure, and their judgement understandable. **RICHARD AND ELIZABETH COOK** *Cambridge*

### Hamlet blows hot and cold

Sir: With reference to the time of year in *Hamlet* (letters, 18 and 19 February): yes, the ghost scenes suggest that it is cold, but the Queen, describing Ophelia's death, says her garland has "crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, long purples", and the willow "shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream". It is not so cold that the gravediggers can't dig graves, or too stormy for Laertes to sail to Paris and back, and Hamlet to set sail for England.

The point is that no particular season is indicated in the play. The chill of the ghost scenes and the floweriness of Ophelia are mental states and complement each other. **EMMA TRISTRAM** *Binsted, West Sussex*

### Bracing verse

Sir: Noting the further commentary over the obituary about Nora Beloff (18 February), I must remind Jack Pole that although I had enormous respect for her, the poem about the maths master's braces was not written by her, but by me. She was unlikely to have seen Mr Morris's braces because they would normally only be revealed in the boys' changing room. **MICHAEL SELSON** *Rotherham, South Yorkshire*



## essay

**T**he emperor is dead, long live the emperor. As China awoke yesterday to the news that Deng Xiaoping had passed away, the only thing missing was a senior figure with enough stature to fill Mr Deng's shoes. For the first time since its founding in 1949, the People's Republic of China is without a credible "paramount leader", and it is with no little unease that the world waits to see if China's political system really has matured into some sort of collective leadership.

President Jiang Zemin, the man who has ostensibly been in charge since Mr Deng was last seen in public three years ago, must be thinking that his mentor might have timed his death with a little more care. China is only two weeks into the new Year of the Ox, and for the superstitious any unfortunate event before tonight's full moon represents a bad omen for the year. More practically for Mr Jiang, whose priority for the immediate future is maintaining social stability, is the fact that during the Chinese New Year period, up to 90 million floating workers are on the move as they travel back to work after the country's most important public holiday. Security will be extra tight over the next few weeks.

Mr Jiang and his colleagues had been gearing up for world attention to focus on China in 1997, but for rather different reasons. The annual gathering of China's parliament, the National People's Congress, will convene in Peking a week on Saturday; and this year's meeting of the rubber-stamp body was supposed to be a celebration of the final countdown to Hong Kong's return to the motherland. Instead, it will now be dominated by public tributes to Mr Deng, and a private scramble by top leaders to establish their leadership positions.

China's nationalistic run-up to the July 1 Hong Kong transition will be overshadowed by the uncertainty felt by the rest of the world over China's political stability in the post-Deng era. It probably will not be until this autumn's full Chinese Communist Party Congress, held only once every five years, that the shape of the new top leadership grouping starts to fall into place. Even before Mr Deng's departure, this was the congress that Mr Jiang hoped would put the seal on his status as Mr Deng's official heir. Mr Jiang - who is also party chief and head of the army - will have to do some



The uncharismatic seventy-year-old Jiang Zemin, thrust to power as a compromise figure after the Tiananmen massacre, is never going to be a patriarch in the mould of Mao or Deng

Sports Photo Agency

## The long march to a new order

Deng Xiaoping may have left a legacy of economic modernisation and political stability to his chosen successor Jiang Zemin, but democracy is still only a distant prospect, says Teresa Poole

deft political manoeuvring as he seeks to keep the support of key personalities and the military. The Congress must establish, for instance, who will take over as prime minister when Li Peng finishes his second term in March 1998.

If Mr Jiang emerges secure after the Congress, as most analysts at the moment believe he can, he will claim his diplomatic prize of the year - a summit meeting with President Clinton, probably in Washington. And if all goes according to plan, China's year will wind up with the last of the already officially-designated "important events" of 1997, the diversion of the Yangtze River for the Three Gorges Dam project.

China may be able to change the course of one of the world's great waterways, but will it for the first time be able to secure a smooth succession of political power? When Chairman Mao died at the end of the Cultural Revolution's 10-year devastation, it needed the army to propel Mr Deng to paramount leader status. "I think the situation now is totally different,"

says a senior Western diplomat in Peking. "When Mao died we were at the end of an unprecedentedly negative decade, one of enormous chaos, huge suffering, political exhaustion. It's different now. There are huge numbers of problems in China but we are not in that kind of situation at all. There is a consensus, with qualifications, on which way China is headed. There is a consensus that economic reform has been right. And that there isn't really a proper alternative to that." Nor is there any obvious alternative as "core" leader to the uncharismatic Mr Jiang. At the moment there are no evident rivals for the top job.

Whatever the efforts of the propaganda machine, 70-year-old Mr Jiang was never going to be a patriarch in the same mould as Mao and Deng. Born

in Jiangsu province and trained in the Soviet Union, he rose steadily through the party ranks in the Shanghai municipality before he was unexpectedly elevated to Communist Party chief in the wake of the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre. He was a compromise figure whose main claim to promotion was that no one objected strongly enough to him.

From this unpromising start, Mr Deng's protracted decline has allowed the president time to establish some sort of power base. He has also over the past year sought to put his own mark on Chinese politics with a much-vaunted campaign to create a "spiritual civilisation", an elusive concept in China's get-rich-quick society.

Mr Jiang's political flair may be limited, but he has one strong card in his hand. China's senior leaders know that a destabilising power struggle would only weaken the hold of the Communist Party. To borrow from Benjamin Franklin, albeit talking of a very different matter, Mr Jiang and his colleagues might observe the dictum: "We must indeed all hang together, or most assuredly, we shall all hang separately."

If China is to have a "core" leader rather than an emperor, the most pressing question is whether the lacklustre Mr Jiang can steer the country through the next stage of reform and

deal with the inherent contradictions of the "socialist market economy" bequeathed by Mr Deng. China's economy may have been transformed, but its politics are as strange as ever. What other major country in the world these days would have a question mark hanging over it because of the death of a 92-year-old man who had not been seen in public since 1994, and who had been too frail for months possibly years, to wield any direct influence?

It is symptomatic of today's China that while Chinese officials were maintaining until the end that Mr Deng's health had seen "no great change", with hindsight the first official indication that his condition was severe was a front-page report in the country's main stock-market newspaper saying that a meeting of top leaders had been held on Tuesday in Peking "to study Deng's economic theories". The message was: we are not telling anyone about Mr Deng's condition, but share-trading is OK.

The first public announcement following confirmation of Mr Deng's death illustrated the enduring Communist approach to collective decision-making. A total of 459 officials were appointed to the funeral committee, with Mr Jiang as chairman. The committee's first decree was that no foreign dignitaries and no foreign media will attend the funeral

and mourning ceremonies.

In such a secret and opaque political system, an individual's political clout has more to do with personal prestige than any job title. In early 1992, for instance, two years after his formal retirement, Mr Deng quietly thwarted hardliner attempts to stifle his economic reforms by embarking on his "southern tour", thus kick-starting a new economic boom. An unpublished trip by an old man without any formal position was what defined China's subsequent policy direction.

It is personal prestige which Mr Jiang so sorely lacks, despite his tendency to break into song when meeting other heads of state. Yet it is his government which must now grapple with China's main problems, such as rising unemployment, venal corruption, a state sector where nearly half the enterprises are losing money, and an increasing inability to impose central control on China's provinces.

To date, there has been much more talk than action on all these fronts because of the policy-making paralysis during Mr Deng's protracted decline. Now that the post-Deng era has arrived, will this hiatus be resolved so that China can move definitively into the second stage of economic reform, a transition which will prove much more painful than the paradigm shift engineered by Mr Deng? Perhaps the most wor-

rying prospect for this year is not so much an overt power struggle, but that political jockeying for position behind the scenes means that serious policy-making is again put on hold. Urgent decisions, for example on bankrupt state enterprises, will be left on the back-burner because the political risk of tackling them is too high.

At the moment, Mr Jiang has macro-economics on his side: this year China's economic growth is forecast at 10.5 per cent, while inflation remains around 6 per cent, statistics which help cushion the blow of massive state enterprise redundancies. The real challenge to Communist Party rule may come when political repression is accompanied by China's next cyclical economic downturn.

With all China's dissidents and pro-democracy activists firmly behind bars, the chances in the short term of protest from below achieving real political change seem remote. The brutal truth is that persecuted mainland dissidents count for much more abroad than they do with the bulk of the population, who tend to view them as fighting a hopeless cause. Given the controlled official media and education system, Chinese who are angry about corruption and wilful officials rarely make the connection with the need for public accountability. China's progression to a more open political system probably depends on the new cohort of younger bureaucrats, many with Western training, who are making their way up the ministries. But even they talk more about improving the rule of law than

the prospect of Western-style democracy, ignoring any possible link.

In terms of personal freedom, the Deng reform programme did a great deal to reduce the party's control over people's lives. But next week-end's National People's Congress, when hundreds of hand-picked trustees descend on the capital to vote through the party's legislative agenda, is a sharp reminder of just how Peking still views the idea of representative government.

Despite this control - or should that be because of it? - the Communist Party is left with the problem of securing a smooth political transition within the closed political system. Mr Jiang's own surprise promotion in 1989 illustrates the point. Plucked from relative political mediocrity, he was catapulted to high leadership precisely because he lacked a defining political vision.

In Chinese official jargon, Mao was the "first generation" leader. Deng led the "second generation", and Mr Jiang is at the core of the "third generation". So who then are the "fourth generation" leadership candidates, given that Mr Jiang is already 70 years old? There are none, and such inquiries are off-limits while so much emphasis is being placed on bolstering the present leadership. But this is China's real succession question, and one which will determine how the world's largest country develops in the 21st century. On past performance, it could be well into the next century before that tricky personnel problem is resolved. The odds are that it will not be decided by universal suffrage.

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## The long innings of Deng the cricket-lover

From M Jean-Pierre Lachaise. Sir, Many of the tributes to the late Deng Xiaoping have concentrated on his political career to the exclusion of his personal qualities, but as one of the few people left alive who remembers Deng Xiaoping from his student days in France, I can testify to his perhaps unexpected love of cricket.

"Chean-Bierre," he would say to me - he had some difficulty with French consonants to begin with - "Chean-Bierre, as you know, I shall devote my life to a world revolution. The people will take over. The masses will take power. But there are some things in the old order I shall regret having to abolish, and one of them is cricket."

Where he had seen cricket being played I have no idea, but he always stuck to the old adage of "Know thine enemy", and he considered cricket to be the most quintessentially aristocratic and elitist of all sports.

"You know," he once said to me, "cricket is a paradoxical game. Everyone looks equal. Everyone seems to get a fair whack. Everyone is

dressed the same. Yet behind the empty rituals you will find power concentrated ruthlessly in the hands of one man, the captain. Cricket is autocracy dressed up as democracy. From this point of view it is indistinguishable from Marxism-Leninism."

Incidentally, he pronounced his name not Deng but Don, as in Don Pérignon. From Dr Albert Anstruther GP ret'd. Sir, I am probably one of the few English people who took part in the Long March, the famous Chinese Communist trek to achieve liberation, and Deng Xiaoping soon learnt that I was English and sought me out to talk about cricket. Many was the time we would seek out some flat piece of grass and bowl to each other with improvised bat and ball.

"Mao does not approve of my taste in sports," said Deng. "He thinks cricket is decadent and bourgeois." "Hm," I said. "Tricky. What do you say to that?" "I say to him that we have much to learn from cricket. I tell him that without the wicket-keeper the ball would fly to the boundary, that if four men stand in a circle one



Miles Kingston

will surely catch the ball, that 11 men can cry 'How is that?' but only one can decide on the truth. And he always nods and then writes all these things down in the little red book he is compiling."

Great days! Incidentally, he always pronounced his name not Deng but Don, as in Don Bradman. From Mr Herbert Sangster Sir, During the Forties I found myself in China as an agricultural adviser to Chiang Kai-Shek, but was captured by the Communists in the civil war. Things might have gone ill had Deng

Xiaoping not discovered that I was a keen cricketer, and he reinstated me as a Communist agricultural adviser.

It was always a great source of sadness to him that there were not enough Chinamen interested in cricket to form a team in the whole of China, so he depended upon foreigners for his playing companions, and was ready to capture them in battle if necessary. Nobody was more surprised than me when a Chinese army officer came round the prisoners of war shouting, "Anyone here play cricket?"

Deng always had a sense of humour, and forbade us to refer to the ball called a Chinaman as a Chinaman. He used to toss me the ball and say, "Try to get this man out with an Occidental!"

His name, as far as I could make out, was pronounced "Dung". I once asked him which was the proper way to say it, but all he replied was, "Ah ha! As I suspected - you cannot read the Chinaman!" How we laughed.

From Sir Norbert Winter Sir, One of my last acts as a diplomat before I retired was to accompany a trade

delegation to Beijing, and there I was surprised to be interrogated fiercely by Deng about the state of modern cricket. Why was five-day Test cricket being degraded by one-day internationals? Why were cricketers dressing up in pyjamas? And what was all this about crash helmets?

I told him that, as I understood the situation, it was all to satisfy the requirements of Australian television. "Then by the shade of CB Fly it shall not happen here!" he shouted.

It may be a coincidence, but I have noticed that Rupert Murdoch has found it much harder to penetrate China than anywhere else.

The last time I spoke to Deng Xiaoping, I dared to bring up the subject of Tiananmen Square and challenged him to justify it. He sighed and said, "One thing I will not stand is crowd invasion of pitch," then changed the subject.

Incidentally, I got the impression that he pronounced his name more like Dong. When I confessed to having trouble with the pronunciation, he whispered, "Just think of luminous nose."

مجلس الامم المتحدة



## Tories playing patriot games over Europe

Lord Howe was one of the first politicians to see, some months ago, that the danger posed to his party in the 1997 election by its irreconcilable differences on Europe was an almost exact echo of that which Labour faced over defence in 1983. So when he says, as he did yesterday, that his own support for the Tories would "diminish" if Malcolm Rifkind's "hostility" to the single currency were to become official party policy, he knows very well into what dangerous waters he is treading.

James Callaghan denounced Labour's unilateralist defence policy in terms which blew apart the fragile truce that had been constructed between the right and left of the party. Whatever other faults he may have had, Lord Callaghan didn't enter the debate for reasons of personal vanity, apart from that one deadly intervention, he has never been a "back-seat driver". He did it because, finally, he thought the defence issue was bigger than party.

He rightly thought that ideologies of the left might keep the party out of office for a decade or more. And he didn't really mind who knew it. Lord Howe had the business classes as much as himself in mind. But his remarks demonstrate how at least some of the Tory pro-Europeans are now capable of making the same kind of decision that Callaghan took in 1983. The world discovered the inappropriateness of Denis Healey's famous gibe about Lord Howe during the relegate of 1990. And yesterday the dead sheep became Ken Clarke's Rottweiler.

We are not yet at the Callaghan stage for the very good reason that thanks to Kenneth Clarke, and quite a lot less visibly Michael Heseltine, the Cabinet still - just - has a policy which takes into account the country's rather than merely what its managers conceive to be the party's interest. By any logic other than of the Mad Hatter's Tea Party, this is what keeping open the options for EMU, if by any chance it proves to be a success and the British people decide in favour of it, must be.

Never mind that Malcolm Rifkind, whether in single-minded pursuit of his leadership ambitions or of what *The Sun* dictates should be his party's electoral strategy, tries to rewrite it in a radio interview. (His words simply could not be squared with a formal Cabinet text which, beside saying that a 1 January 1999 starting date was "very unlikely", also says that "if a single currency was delayed we would of course retain the option to join at a later date", whether that was in the first wave or not.) Or that the Chancellor has to visit the Foreign Secretary's official residence at midnight and stand over him while he agrees to restate a policy already agreed unanimously by the Cabinet less than a month ago.

Clark does not give up; he is in deadly earnest. And he won yesterday's battle handily. Because John Major knows that losing his Chancellor would be worse even than disappointing the leader writers of *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Daily Mail* and *The Sun*.

This bears repeating because there is unmistakable evidence, available to both the main parties, that the strident Euro-scepticism,



**Donald McIntyre**  
The anti-Europeans are prepared to take any risk in defence of Little Britain. But the pro-Europeans mean business too

whether press- or politician-driven, is making an impact on the doonsteps. Polling focus groups and canvassing is throwing up a clear finding that the salience of Europe as an issue has started to rise. Some estimates now put Europe at around third place in voters' lists of issues causing concern where it was at eighth or ninth in the middle of last year. This doesn't mean that the country has suddenly swung over to rampant nationalism. But at the very least it does mean that voters who are deeply suspicious of the EU are more enthusiastically citing it as an issue which could decide their vote. This is partly why Labour has been shoring up its defences against the wider charges that it is ready to sell out British interests.

Now this doesn't happen by accident: if you have five national daily newspapers - including all the mass-circulation newspapers except *The Mirror* - committed to a common Europhobic ideology, if the mass-circulation *Sun*, run as it has been doing this week a series of reports from European cities which draw an unrelentingly bleak picture of late-20th-century economic and social decay and lays the blame for it almost exclusively on EU and domestic social legislation, then it makes an impact. Especially if you have a political party staring defeat in the face. In addition, all the aspiring Tory leadership candidates know that there will be a majority of their party's MPs after the election who will be identifiably on the Euro-sceptic right of the party - ranging from those who simply oppose the single currency outright to those who are now serious about withdrawal. (So serious that there is even fresh talk of Norman Lamont staging a surprise leadership challenge on a ticket of straight withdrawal.) What's more, if Labour's poll lead starts to narrow - and it hasn't shown much sign of doing so thus far - then the Euro-sceptics will shout triumphantly that an all-out nationalist campaign offers the best hope of victory, even if it's the economic recovery rather than Europe which is really making the difference.

But there's a big catch. And Lord Howe illustrated it in his quiet way yesterday. As it happens, Clarke, Howe and others believe that the improving economy offers them a better platform on which to win the election. The Chancellor at his meeting with backbenchers on Wednesday night was trying to remind them precisely of the importance of an improving economy to the coming campaign. But in any case, Lord Howe and others are not now going to swallow the shift in policy attempted by Rifkind on Wednesday.

And that means that Major cannot bow to *The Sun* and his own Euro-sceptics without exposing divisions on a scale which would more than cancel out the electoral value of nationalism. Those on the pro-European wing aren't going to go quietly. During the Maastricht debates those on the right threatening John Major with defeat, even a defeat which might bring down the Government, used to say that they were ready to put the national interest above the party's; now the pro-Europeans believe it's their turn.

## No wonder politics is nothing to rave about

by Suzanne Moore

I have a dream. The date of the election is announced, posters are unveiled, speeches are made, split ends are gelled down, spins over Europe are smoothed over, the tired old process is cranked up once again, the press gets excited - but come the day, no one else does. No one turns up to vote at all. The polling booths are empty. No one wins the election. No one loses it. Except those seeking public office. As you can tell, I'm with Swampy, or Mr Swampy, as Jeremy Paxman insisted on calling him on *Newsnight*. Swampy thinks we shouldn't vote because it only encourages the politicians, and who in their right minds would want to do that?

This is an infantile position. "Yeah, register to vote and stuff up your voting papers en masse", a *cri de coeur* of a disaffected generation for whom adolescence has been prolonged by the material effects of Tory policies, whose politics have been formed precisely in opposition to what is on offer.

Direct action comes out of a legitimate frustration with the inertia of traditional political processes. Young people, we are told, have never been much interested in politics. As they get older they become more enamoured. They grow up. Or, you could say, they give up. If maturity means a sudden interest in a declining institution that still operates as it did in the 19th century, then there is a strong case for euthanasia for anyone over 25.

It is not just the young who have lost faith. A recent poll found that black people were four times less likely to vote than whites. Three in 10 blacks are not registered to vote. Seven out of 10 women believe that the political parties do not pay enough attention to issues that are important to women. The same survey also showed deep dissatisfaction amongst the core of female voters aged between 25 and 54.

None of this is particularly surprising. What is shocking is that all the main political parties continue to ignore it. If women, if black people, if the 18-30 generation do not feel inspired or represented in the political process, who is it for, exactly? Politics is a question of education, and that if only people understood what goes on in our great democracy they would be more impressed. This is not the case. We are not stupid. As consumers we are used to more and more choice; as voters we are offered less and less.

Indeed, when you watch the faces of people who have queued for more than an hour to get into the House of Commons to see their representa-



Political party poopers: young people, understandably, are keener to rave than to vote

Photograph: REX

In the House of Commons the fray itself is not a pretty sight. It is not just the overwhelming maleness of the place that does you in, it is its fundamental staleness ... in fact not a lot happens



mons to see their representatives perform, you can see the disappointment. For the first five minutes it is enough for them to see in the flesh those they are used to seeing on TV. "Ooh, isn't he tall?" they say of Tony Blair. Soon, however, when the chamber empties out and a mere eight members of the Labour party are festively debating the NHS with three bored Tories, you can see them thinking, "Is that all there is?"

The lack of trust in all professional politicians articulated by Swampy and his gang of swamp fighters is symptomatic of our lack of trust in all kinds of big institutions. The quickest way these days to garner political credibility is to appear to come from outside the dirty world of politics - like the animal rights activists, the single issue groups. Coming from below, they soon position themselves above the fray.

The fray itself is not a pretty sight. It is not just the overwhelming maleness of the Commons that does you in, it is its fundamental staleness. You can smell it. The trouble is, once you have been there a few times the mustiness gets into your clothes and you don't even notice it any more. Just as you

don't notice that grown men walk around with swords, that there are thousands of rules that pertain to nothing but "traditions" that no one is able properly to explain to you, and that in fact not a lot happens.

"Oh well, it's great theatre," its apologists will claim. But most of the time it's not even that. If this is theatre, it's fringe theatre of the worst kind, which has survived only because of various subsidies. Every single person you meet there acknowledges the poor state of the place. No one thinks this is the right way to run a railroad, but it doesn't stop them getting on the train day after day.

Perhaps it will change if there are more women, they say. Perhaps better pay would attract a better class of MP. Perhaps it would be better if the constitutional edges were tweaked slightly. Perhaps it's the fault of the building itself, whose history weighs too heavily. And perhaps it's the responsibility of the electorate, who just aren't interested enough.

Yet this system could not operate without a notion of public passivity. This institution survives because the great majority of us ignore it. Politicians follow an agenda that rarely matches the real issues of

the day or corresponds to the subjects that many of us express an interest in. On issues as varied as child care, the legalisation of certain drugs, help for the homeless and all sorts of environmental concerns, it is widely acknowledged that politicians have not got a lot to offer.

When one of the poor creatures dies, and one constituency or another is left unrepresented in the months before a by-election, life, as they say, goes on. Some analysts claim that globalisation makes politics as it is currently practised less important, but the other way to look at it is that it underlines the truism that all politics is, in fact, local politics.

If people feel that huge economic but faceless forces are controlling their lives, the result for some is moral drift. For others it is also the moral indignation that governs many of the protests we have seen lately. Swampy's take on all this is that if we ignore the politicians they

may go away, because they will feel less powerful. This is naive: we already ignore them, and they have not gone away.

Voting, whichever way you do it, is an affirmation of faith in this congenitally deformed version of democracy. The numbers of people who won't vote this time around are read as a sign of electoral apathy rather than political failure.

Many of the disillusioned will in the end find themselves agreeing with Richard Neville's statement: "The difference between voting Tory and voting Labour may only be half an inch but it's the half an inch in which we live", and hope that their X marks the right spot. Others, who don't register, or mess up their ballot papers, will be yet again written off. But not voting is a mute protest against the system itself. If voting is a rare chance to have your say, then not voting is one of the only ways of saying what you really think.

## The end of a beautiful friendship

John Hume's bitter attack on Sinn Fein may force the IRA to think again, says David McKittrick

John Hume's assault on Sinn Fein in yesterday's *Irish News* was plainly occasioned by the general election, in which his party will be pitched into a fierce battle with Sinn Fein, but it also poses profound questions about the peace process.

The SDLP leader's criticisms, and indeed condemnation, of the republican movement was expressed in forceful terms, declaring that any election deal with Sinn Fein without an IRA ceasefire amounted to "asking our voters to support the killing of innocent human beings". This language came as something of a surprise to many, given that for most of the 1990s Hume has preferred to engage with Sinn Fein through private dialogue rather than public denunciation. But it remains a deeper surprise that the John Hume - Gerry Adams relationship ever blossomed in the first place, given the fact that the two men are direct rivals for the leadership of Northern Irish nationalism. That relationship has troubled and disconcerted many, particularly in the SDLP.

It resulted in an unprecedented political paradox. On the one hand, the two leaders developed a personal bond deep enough to create the peace process and at many points rescue it from collapse. On the other, their two parties remained not only separate but actively hostile to each other. This antagonism is underpinned and explained by centuries of tradition. There are two almost completely distinct traditions within Irish nationalism: the first, the physical force republicanism of Tone, Emmet, the Fenians, the Irish Republican Broth-

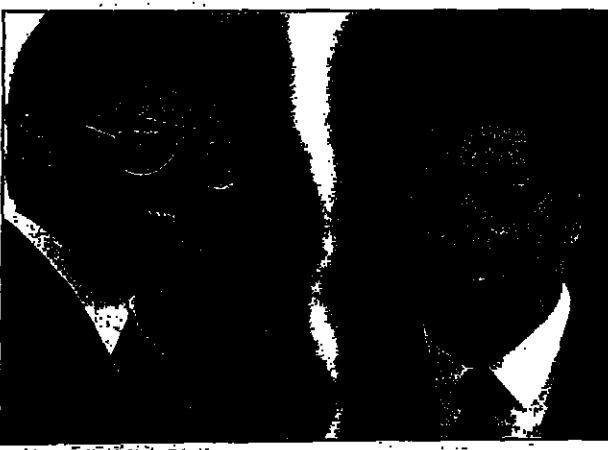
erhood and latterly the IRA; the second, the constitutional nationalism of Grattan, O'Connell, Parnell, Redmond and now Hume.

The picture is not quite so straightforward in the south, where parties founded by the revolutionaries of 1916 and the early 1920s have evolved from the "slightly constitutional" into strong opponents of violence.

But in the north, Sinn Fein has always been a bitter opponent of the SDLP and its precursor, the old Nationalist party. Both the SDLP and Sinn Fein are nationalist parties but, as throughout history, their relationship is one of institutionalised hatred. The constitutionalists believe the IRA besmirches a noble cause with violence, while the republicans accuse the SDLP of preventing the formation of a united anti-British front.

A voting pact between the two sides could produce seven or even eight nationalist wins in the 18 Northern Ireland constituencies. But the philosophical divisions between them have run so deep for so long that such a deal is unthinkable without a well-established IRA ceasefire.

The Hume-Adams relationship, therefore, pretty much flies in the face of Irish history. It is also a source of



The relationship flies in the face of Irish history

much confusion at election times. But all along the existence of Hume-Adams has not prevented inter-party clashes at lower levels. An SDLP councillor, in a complaint echoed by John Hume yesterday, has accused Sinn Fein of still being involved in the ancient art of vote-stealing. The allegation is that some among the impressive retinue of bodyguards who surround Gerry Adams are convinced of the merits of democracy that they had hoped to vote more than once.

Even a few votes can be vital, since this election is more than usually important in the eternal SDLP-Sinn

Fein battle. Sinn Fein's vote in last May's forum election was a record 15.5 per cent, while the SDLP's dipped to 21 per cent.

In the coming election most believe Adams, aided by boundary changes, will win West Belfast back from Hume's colleague Joe Hendron. There is also a chance of Martin McGuinness winning in Mid-Ulster. Sinn Fein MPs do not take their seats at Westminster, but even so the election would be seen as a triumph for the republicans.

That record Sinn Fein vote came about because many who do not normally vote for the party lent their votes to the republicans on the theory that a vote for Adams was the best way of encouraging a new IRA ceasefire. The tactic did not work.

It is unclear whether a further republican electoral triumph would make another IRA ceasefire more or less likely. Most nationalists believe Adams and McGuinness want a ceasefire, but there is a widespread suspicion, and indeed fear, that their stock has fallen sharply within the republican movement.

A Dublin source summed it up: "One thing that is getting more and more pronounced is a worry that

these guys really are hostage to a few troglodytes." Adams himself seemed to signal that the militarists were in control when he admitted last month, "The genie in many ways is back out of the bottle."

Looking beyond its election aspect, Hume's new outspokenness reflects some of that suspicion, in that it amounts to a public questioning of the ability of Adams and McGuinness to shepherd away from terrorism what one observer described as the slowest ships in the republican convoy.

The IRA has seemed to take for granted that it can kill people with political impunity on this side of the general election. Its expectation appears to be that the next British government would, firstly, be impressed by such killings and, secondly, have no option but to engage with republicans again, no matter how much blood had been spilt.

IRA leaders may also have taken for granted that Hume, whatever the provocation, would oblige them by once again acting as facilitator in new negotiations. He has now planted the thought that they cannot automatically rely on his good offices.

The IRA has almost certainly not comprehended the extent to which its continuing violence may poison the well with an incoming Labour administration, inhibiting what will in any event be a nervous and preoccupied government. It has not, in other words, realised that phases of politics cannot be alternated with phases of violence. Hume's intervention may go some way to shaking their deadly complacency.

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# business & city

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## Rank to create 3,000 jobs as it buys back £350m in shares

Tom Stevenson  
City Editor

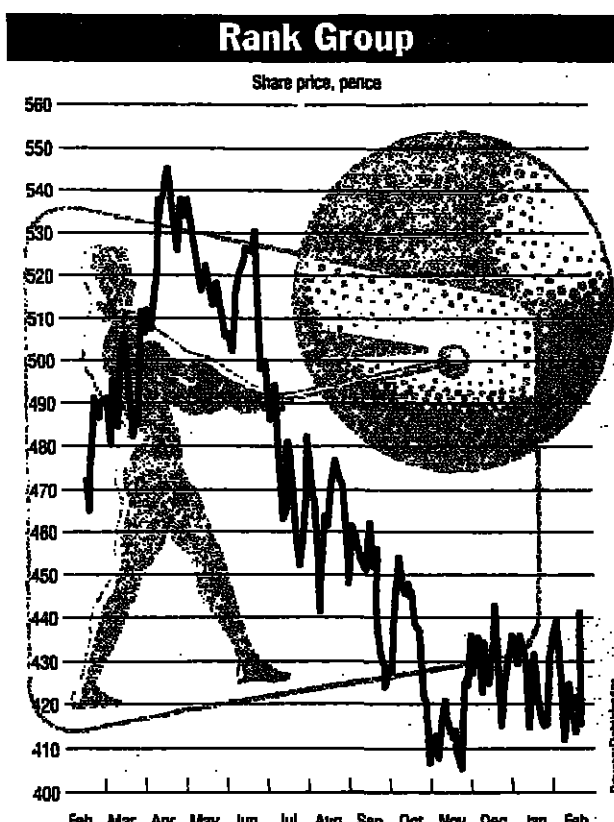
Rank is to create 3,000 jobs this year as it expands its Butlin's to Hard Rock leisure and entertainment businesses. Plans include 10 new Mecca bingo clubs, 20 large Tom Copleigh pubs, 5 multiplex cinemas and a holiday village in Cumbria.

News of the job creation plans accompanied full-year figures showing a slump in profits as new chief executive Andrew Teare's deck-clearing write-offs took effect. Rank's shares jumped 19.5p to 434.5p, however, as the market focused on the promise of a share buy-back and the prospect of Rank finally securing a sale of its remaining 20 per cent stake in Rank Xerox.

Mr Teare said yesterday Rank would be seeking approval from its shareholders to buy back up to 10 per cent of its shares at a cost of around £350m at the current share price. A sale of the Rank Xerox stake would easily cover a repurchase, with analysts believing Xerox, the most likely buyer, might pay £1bn to take complete control of the office equipment business.

Rank's new jobs are to be created around the country with 880 slated for a new Oasis Forest Holiday Village in Cumbria. A further 750 jobs are pencilled in for 10 Mecca bingo clubs, to add to the division's existing 133. Southampton is to get a new £25m multi-leisure centre which will create jobs for 300.

Mr Teare, who has been in the job for just under a year after moving from English



China Clays, is under mounting pressure to return Rank to a growth track. Since his appointment, the leisure group's shares have fallen from a high of 545p to as low as 403.5p.

He said yesterday: "During 1996, we undertook a re-appraisal of all aspects of our business and a period of change and restructuring has followed. The steps we have taken are making the company more

focused, entrepreneurial and forward looking."

Mr Teare also confirmed that Rank is seeking buyers for its film distribution business, which has a catalogue of films including the *Cory* On series and newer classics such as *Strictly Ballroom*. He poured cold water, however, on expectations that the division, which also owns the famous symbol of a man striking a golf ball, might raise



Under pressure: Investors are waiting for chief executive Andrew Teare to return Rank to a growth track

between £100m and £150m, with analysts now suggesting a price tag of about £70m.

During the year the rationalisation of Rank's previously disparate interests included the sale of Precision Industries, an engineering business, for £66m, holiday group Shearings for £75m and Kingston Plantation for £30m. Acquisitions, totalling £460m, compared with £60m in 1995 and

included the American Hard Rock Cafes and Tom Copleigh, the pub chain.

Excluding exceptional items, operating profits rose 13 per cent to £290m during 1996, in line with expectations, struck from a 9 per cent rise in turnover to £2.08bn. Underlying earnings per share slipped from 24.3p to 24.1p, allowing an 8 per cent rise in the dividend to 17p.

Reported profits were hit by a number of one-off items, including a £232m exceptional charge to cover permanent diminution in property values and £35m of restructuring charges. That compared with a £236m one-off profit in 1995 on the sale of part of the Rank Xerox stake and resulted in a fall in pre-tax profits from £515m to £65m.

Three of Rank's four core divisions reported double digit profit growth, with film and entertainment services the star performer. The film arm was boosted by a high number of Hollywood releases. At home, Pinewood studios reported record profits.

Hard Rock, which was reunited with its American sister company during the year, grew through acquisitions but saw sales at existing restaurants fall 4 per cent. This was mainly thanks to poor performances in Paris, which was hit by terrorism and a wave of BSE-inspired anglophobia, and in Orlando and Nashville. The Hard Rock brand is being boosted by the launch of a record label and a new American cable television series, *Hard Rock Live*, which starts next month with £30m sponsorship from the car maker Pontiac.

In leisure, Odeon cinemas enjoyed a record year thanks to films such as *Independence Day* and *Ty Story*. Bingo struggled off the week adding most of the industry since the introduction of the National Lottery, with admissions 10 per cent higher in the second half. Casinos enjoyed higher admissions and a better win ratio.

## CBI cuts back growth forecast as exports fall

Diane Coyle  
Economics Editor

The strong pound has led the Confederation of British Industry to slash its forecast for growth this year. The latest survey of trends in industry by the employers' organisation reported a fall in export orders, although manufacturers' total order books were unchanged, however.

But the growing gap between manufacturing and the rest of the economy was highlighted by a rise in consumer confidence to its highest level since August 1988. This followed news earlier in the week of a rebound in high street sales last month.

Expert opinion was just as divided. David Bloom, an economist at broker James Capel, said: "The broad trend in the economy is up. Not raising interest rates now is storing up trouble for the future."

But Dharshini David at HSBC Markets predicted a fragile manufacturing recovery, with the CBI survey pointing to a possible dip in output this month. The CBI trimmed its forecast for growth in 1997 to 2.8 per cent from 3.1 per cent, making it one of the most pessimistic predictions for the economy this year. Weaker output, investment and exports account for the reduction.

Manufacturers' output expectations increased for the second month running following a fall in December. "However, firms remain fairly upbeat about stepping up production in the coming months, as home demand for manufactured goods continues to hold up," Mr Junankar said.

The clearest sign of the impact of the strong pound came in lower expected price rises. Although prices normally slow after the traditional January increases, the balance expecting to raise rather than reduce prices dropped sharply from 16 per cent to 4 per cent.

The CBI still expects interest rates to rise by half a percentage point after the election, and the reason could be seen in yesterday's consumer confidence survey.

The survey, carried out for the European Commission by GFK, showed confidence on a rising trend and back at its highest level since August 1988. Optimism about prospects for the economy dipped slightly but this was more than offset by a surge in optimism about personal finances. This was especially pronounced among young people.

"With building society windfalls in the pipeline, confidence can only improve further," said John O'Sullivan, an economist at NatWest Markets.

## Welsh Water's pricing under investigation

Chris Godsmark  
Business Correspondent

The water watchdog, Ofwat, is investigating allegations that Welsh Water is engaged in predatory pricing tactics in an attempt to stifle one of the first genuine moves to introduce competition into the privatised industry.

The dispute involves moves by one of the UK's largest paper producers, Shotton Paper from South Wales, to switch from Welsh Water to a new supplier, Shotton, which is owned by a Finnish paper group, pays about £2m to Welsh Water for its water supply with sewerage costs on top. The company, which claims to be Britain's biggest manufacturer of newsprint, has argued these charges are excessive.

A London-based consultancy company, called Enviro-Logic, has said it can slash Shotton's bills by exploiting a little-known provision in the Water Act. The move, known as an inset appointment, involves a paper transaction in which Enviro-Logic buys existing supplies and services from Welsh Water at wholesale prices determined with agreement from Ofwat. The process is the only current option open to large industrial groups which want to change their water provider.

However, Welsh Water is thought to have responded by offering to cut its own charges to Shotton. Dr Jeremy Bryan, Enviro-Logic's managing director, said he believed Welsh Water had gone even further, by pledging to undercut any price put forward by the consultancy group. He said the move

amounted to abuse of its monopoly powers.

"Welsh Water are doing this in the full knowledge that they are pricing a competitor out of the market. That seems to me to be a clear breach of their operating licence," Dr Bryan said. Ofwat confirmed it was investigating the claims. Welsh Water declined to comment on details of its pricing policy. However, a spokesman said: "The ball is now back in the court of Shotton Paper. We have put a fair price to Ofwat."

Chris Robinson, Shotton's finance director, said Ofwat had recently submitted provisional findings on the pricing proposals. "Clearly we are seeking to get the best possible price for our water. But we're still not satisfied. The process has been dragging on for far too long."

The row is another sign of growing frustration in the industry with Ofwat's progress on the issue of water competition. So far Enviro-Logic has submitted 15 bids to the regulator to take over services for companies which use large quantities of water, including plants run by brewers Guinness and Bass.

Yet almost six years after privatisation, Ofwat has sanctioned only one inset appointment, which involved Anglian Water taking over supplies to a Buxted chicken plant.

Ian Ryan, the regulator, has previously said he supported the principle of inset appointments but was unhappy with the legislation, which appeared to give new suppliers an open-ended supply commitment. He is thought to want to limit new supply contracts to a period of no more than five years.

## Railtrack promises to invest over £4m a day

The new railway age

Railtrack plans to spend £4m on the rail network every day over the next 10 years. Important projects include:

- A £15bn modernisation of the West Coast Main Line route now run by Richard Branson's Virgin Group
- The £580m Thameslink 2000 project to expand and improve the north-south cross-London rail service
- A £220m resignalling programme on the Great Eastern route out of London's Liverpool station
- Heathrow Express to get £160m spent on track, signalling and electrification work for the high-speed link from London's Paddington station to open next year
- £140m of improvements to enable Channel Tunnel Eurostar services to run to regional destinations beyond London through to Scotland
- Station renovations worth £100m at Paddington, Waterloo, Edinburgh Waverley and Glasgow Central
- Modernisation of the West Anglia line including signal renewal and improved track layouts costing £85m
- £40m on better radio communications between train drivers and signal boxes in South-east England
- A £40m maintenance programme for the Forth Bridge in Scotland with increased repair and painting work

Randeep Ramesh  
Transport Correspondent

Railtrack, the company that owns Britain's track, signalling and stations, will spend more than £4m a day on the rail network over the next 10 years to resuscitate the nation's vast rail network. The £16bn investment plan involves spending more than £1bn on stations, including building 13 new ones, £2.5bn on track work and more than £2bn on signalling.

The company will have to borrow £2.5bn to finance the spending plans. Sir Robert Horton, the chairman of Railtrack, said that Railtrack would be spending more than 20 per cent than British Rail did in its last year of operation spanning 1993/94.

More than 1,500 miles of track will be renewed over the next 10 years as well as 3,500 miles of sleepers. The West Coast mainline - which Richard Branson's Virgin group took

over this week - will get a £1.5bn upgrade.

Mike Howell, Railtrack's commercial director, confirmed that the company was also in talks with Mr Branson over a further £150m investment in order to cut the five-hour journey from London to Glasgow by nearly 90 minutes. There are already plans to cut the journey time by 70 minutes.

Four stations will be overhauled. London's Paddington and Waterloo stations as well as Edinburgh Waverley and Glasgow Central will have more than £25m spent on them. Nearly 50 stations will get cash injections of £1m.

Leaves on the line will still affect railway services. Railtrack is experimenting with "Swedish scrubbers" - powerful water jets which blast debris from tracks - but will not buy a fleet of vehicles, which would cost £40m, until trials have been successfully completed.

The company is also planning a large capacity freight route from the Channel tunnel to Scotland. If realised, it could see 30 trains a day using the new service - freeing more than 375,000 long-distance lorry journeys from Britain's motorways.

The investment plan comes after John Swift, the rail regulator, recently criticised Railtrack's underspend on infrastructure investment as "wholly unacceptable". Railtrack said yesterday that it did not think there would be "a problem" with the regulator and that all the outstanding maintenance work would be cleared by 2001.

A spokeswoman for the rail regulator said the new spending plans would be studied. "The key question is what action the company is taking and to ensure the spending results in a better railway," she said.

Labour called on the regulator to go through the spending plans with a "fine-tooth

comb", adding that the "company's track record did not inspire confidence".

A Labour government would be committed to tighter regulation and one option under consideration would see the Treasury controlling Railtrack's income. "I think it would be unnecessary to change the current arrangements," said Sir Robert.

Save Our Railways, an anti-privatisation lobbying group, said the plans were "very disappointing". Campaigners listed 50 examples of "neglect" and a spokesman said that passengers had suffered "disgusting, dangerous stations as well as slow and unreliable journeys".

Railtrack's main source of income - track access charges levied on the train companies - generates more than £2bn a year. With Railtrack committed to paying an average £1.6bn a year for its investment plans, the spending plans will not dent the company's balance sheet.

## Workers angry at steel 'dangers'

Barrie Clement  
Labour Editor

The Canadian-owned CoSteel company based in Sheerness, Kent is under investigation for allegedly operating a potentially dangerous and unlawful health and safety regime.

Officials from the Health and Safety Executive are inquiring into union claims that management puts pressure on employees to return to work quickly after industrial accidents.

Documents passed to the HSE also show that management penalises employees for taking time off because of injuries by withdrawing bonuses. Under the system - the existence of which is admitted by management - if a worker takes

a day off in a month because of an accident, other members of his team will lose half their extra payment. Two accidents and they lose all their bonus.

The papers also disclose that points are taken off in salary assessments if employees take time off through accidents.

CoSteel routinely requests staff to take days lost through sickness owing to injury as annual leave, the documents disclose. In 30 letters from staff and former employees, reported in *People Management* magazine, it is alleged that management puts pressure on those recovering from accidents to return to light duties at the plant.

Hugh Billot, CoSteel personnel director, yesterday welcomed the inquiry. He insisted

the company's practices were entirely safe and lawful, and said the company was co-operating fully with HSE representatives. Mr Billot believes the company's system encourages good practice and insisted management would not allow people back to work if they were unfit.

The Iron and Steel Trades Confederation, which among other unions at the plant has been recognised by the company, claims the regime could lead to "employees working when they are unfit and it could deter people from reporting accidents. If that were proven, then CoSteel would be breaking the law, the union argues."

Mr Billot said the concerns had not been raised by employees with the company and that

management always adopted an "open door" policy for complaints. He said the system whereby employees suffering from injuries may be asked to take annual leave had been operating for at least a decade and was in place when unions were recognised.

The salary assessment system was part of an agreement signed by unions in 1988 and injury records, along with such factors as attitude and performance, were taken into account. Staff were "remotely keen" on the bonus system, said Mr Billot. "They love it."

Mr Billot said the union had contacted employees and former staff to elicit the 30 letters which had been passed to the HSE.

## ScotAm gives up float plans and asks for bids

Jim Treanor  
Banking Correspondent

Scottish Amicable yesterday hoisted the white flag over its floatation plans and gave potential bidders a week to table their bids, in what is the first public auction for a mutual life insurer.

Up to six companies may be in the running but SBC Warburg, the investment bank advising ScotAm, refused to give details about the precise number and the identity of the bidders.

Two of the bidders have already declared their hand. They are Abbey National, which bid £1.4bn, and Prudential, which came in with a higher offer of £1.9bn. Australian Mutual Provident (AMP) is another name widely tipped to be in the frame.

The bidding process looks certain to push the price tag of the insurer above £2bn, which will lead to greater payouts to ScotAm's 1.1 million policyholders.

"We believe the process we are publishing today will maximise the value for policyholders and be seen to have done so," said Sandy Stewart, chairman of ScotAm.

ScotAm, which is not subject to Takeover Panel rules because it is not a quoted company, has demanded that all bidders put forward firm proposals by next Friday.

It will then publicise the terms of the bids, if required to do so by the bidders, hold further talks with the suitors and give them until mid-March to submit a final, binding offer.

At the end of the process, which is timetable for the end of next month, ScotAm will recommend only one of the offers to its policyholders, who eventually will be asked to vote on whether to sacrifice the insurer's mutual status.

Policyholders should receive complete details of the recommended bid in a circular in May. Each proposal received will be evaluated by the board, SBC Warburg and Tillinghast-Towers Perrin, an actuarial firm. The board will also consult the Department of Trade and Industry and an independent actuary.

The board will assess the bid on 14 criteria, including the financial security of policyholders and the level of service they will receive.

ScotAm attracted bidders after it recently announced plans to demutualise and float on the stock market in three to five years. Policyholders would have shared £75m between them and the floatation would have released another £200m to £400m in payouts to policyholders. The directors stood to receive share bonuses worth as much as £14.4m.

STOCK MARKETS					
Index	Close	Day's change	Change (%)	1996/97 High	1996/97 Low
FTSE 100	4356.10	-1.30	-0.0	4367.40	3632.30
FTSE 250	4633.50	+13.10	+0.3	4633.50	4015.30
FTSE 350	2150.60	+0.80	+0.0	2150.60	1816.60
FTS SmallCap	2350.55	+4.12	+0.2	2350.55	1954.06
FTS All-Share	2122.75	+1.00	+0.0	2122.75	1791.95
New York	6986.65	-33.48	-0.5	7067.46	5032.94
Tokyo	19051.71	+482.59	+2.6	22666.80	17303.65
Hong Kong	13411.33	+305.01	+2.3	13868.24	10204.87
Frankfurt	3196.03	-37.72	-1.2	3276.16	2253.36

Source: FT Information

INTEREST RATES					
Short sterling*	UK medium gilt*	US long bond			
3m	5.44	6.87			
6m	5.44	6.87			
1y	5.44	6.87			
2y	5.44	6.87			
3y	5.44	6.87			
4y	5.44	6.87			
5y	5.44	6.87			
10y	5.44	6.87			
15y	5.44	6.87			
20y	5.44	6.87			
25y	5.44	6.87			
30y	5.44	6.87			

CURRENCIES					
Index	Close	Day's change	Change (%)	1996/97 High	1996/97 Low
£/\$	1.6122	+0.0002	+0.01	1.5445	1.5445
£/¥	160.25	+0.10	+0.06	154.40	154.40
DM/\$	2.7312	+0.0001	+0.00	2.7312	2.7312
¥/\$	160.25	+0.10	+0.06	154.40	154.40
DM/£	1.6122	+0.0002	+0.01	1.5445	1.5445
¥/£	160.25	+0.10	+0.06	154.40	154.40
DM/¥	2.7312	+0.0001	+0.00	2.7312	2.7312
¥/DM	160.25	+0.10	+0.06	154.40	154.40
DM/\$	2.7312	+0.0001	+0.00	2.7312	2.7312
¥/\$	160.25	+0.10	+0.06	154.40	154.40
DM/£	1.6122	+0.0002	+0.01	1.5445	1.5445
¥/£	160.25	+0.10	+0.06	154.40	154.40
DM/¥	2.7312	+0.0001	+0.00	2.7312	2.7312
¥/DM	160.25	+0.10	+0.06	154.40	154.40

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COMMENT

**'It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that while some franchisees may be able to double their passenger levels, not all of them will - not in any case unless government policy is used to force people off the roads'**

# Not all train routes are heading for big profits

So Railtrack is going to invest £16bn over the next 10 years on Britain's rail infrastructure. Big deal. It can afford it and more, for its revenues are effectively underwritten by the Government. So, too, it might be thought, are the revenues of the train operators, who are being paid big subsidies to take on these franchisees. But are these things really the licence to print money that the City seems to assume? Here's why quite a few of them may not be.

Let's take Virgin, which was this week awarded the West Coast Inter-City franchise, as a starting point. In year one Virgin will get paid £76.5m by the Government to run this service. By the end of the 15 year franchise period, however, it will be paying the Treasury £220m a year and still, under its business plan, be making a whopping great profit on top. To make the figures stack up, Virgin is assuming it will be able roughly to double passenger traffic on the route. Given Virgin's marketing acumen and its undoubted entrepreneurial skills, it stands a very good chance of hitting this target.

Indeed the target is not as ambitious as it might seem. Passenger traffic hit these kind of levels after the last upgrade of the West Coast line in the early 1970s. Once Virgin has reduced journey times with the introduction of its new tilting trains, it is more than possible passengers will return from air and road in sufficient numbers to vindicate these targets. So Virgin, driven on by the spirit of Swampy, may well get there. The

same cannot be said of some of the other franchisees, many of whom are basing their business plans on equally heroic assumptions for revenue growth.

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that while some franchisees may be able to double their passenger levels, not all of them will - not in any case unless government policy is used to force people off the roads. Cost cutting provides an alternative way of making the numbers stack up but as Stagecoach has already discovered with South West Trains, such measures often prove a zero sum game. With some of these franchisees, notably Scotrail and the high-speed commuter routes, it is going to be next to impossible to grow the market by anything significant. The result is that a number of franchisees are going to fail.

As a general rule of thumb, the most vulnerable are going to be those with the highest rates of declining subsidy relative to turnover. National Express and Prism look particularly exposed. And if franchisees start failing that means the railways will be a continuing burden on the public finances for long after they were meant to be.

## The housing market can still boom

The housing market has not yet returned to the excesses of the last decade. There are few gazumpers outside London and the

Home Counties. The rest will almost certainly catch up, however. Pundits who proclaim that the days of boom and bust are over forget their basic economics. When the economy recovers, so do house prices. But the ups and downs in housing are more pronounced than the general economic cycle.

One reason is that supply is relatively fixed. An upswing in prices always increases the number of sellers, but most of these want to buy homes too. The net supply of new housing can grow only slowly and is limited by the availability of places to build. As Mark Twain remarked, they stopped making land.

Psychological factors exaggerate the swings. When demand rises, the urge to get in before all the best houses go or prices rise out of reach compounds the upswing. Confidence in the market vanishes within weeks in 1989, but is now returning with a vengeance.

So as long as there is a business cycle, there will be a bigger housing cycle. We have plenty of these episodes to look back on during the last 40 years. The best counter-argument is the possible reduction in demand for property as a hedge against inflation. If people really believe inflation in Britain will stay low, there is less need to invest in bricks and mortar for an asset that will gain real value over many years. That would make for a one-time reduction in demand for housing that would help keep house price inflation subdued for perhaps another five or ten years.

For the time being, however, there seems every chance that the rest of the country will follow the 15 per cent house price inflation of Greater London. Prices are well below their long-term trend, earnings after inflation and tax are growing strongly, and building society windfalls will provide the funds to cover moving expenses and deposits. Against that, mortgage rates might rise by half a percentage point or so later this year. When the pre-election uncertainty is behind us, watch out for a housing market that looks a bit more boom-like.

## Rank needs a big idea

Andrew Teare looked more relaxed yesterday than at any time since he took on the Herculean challenge of sorting out Britain's largest, least focused and dullest leisure company. His honeymoon period at Rank looked dangerously like ending in divorce unless he could reverse the share price slide that started more or less on the day he moved into the hot seat. Yesterday, for the first time, the market began to believe he was up to the job.

During the reign of Mr Teare's predecessor, Michael Gifford, Rank adopted the Millwall FC approach to investor relations - "no-one likes us and we don't care" - so yesterday's attempt to convince the City it was setting itself demanding but achievable return on capital targets was a positive first

step towards dispelling worries, underscored by last year's expensive Tom Cobleigh acquisition, that Rank's best talent was for squandering shareholders' funds.

The PR offensive has a long way to go yet, however. Analysts still find Rank's level of disclosure unacceptably low. It suggests problems where they may not exist. When the share price has fallen a quarter in a year while the rest of the market has risen 10 per cent, those doubts need to be addressed head-on, not sidestepped.

Presentation aside, the substance of Rank's problems remains intractable. It owns a rag-bag of tired brands like Butlin's that will require heavy capital investment to bring up to date, some mature concepts like Hard Rock, which is struggling even to maintain like-for-like sales let alone grow them, and hard-pressed businesses like Mecca bingo, which is outperforming its peers but still earning less than it did before the National Lottery spoiled the party two years ago.

Getting shot of its £1bn Rank Xerox stake will underpin a balance sheet that is starting to look stretched now a £300m disposal programme is largely complete, but what now? For a company operating in strong growth markets, an inability to find anything sizeable to invest in is some indictment. Mr Teare has come through a sticky first year as well as he could have expected in a business he knew next to nothing about. What he, and Rank, needs more than anything now is a big idea.

# Housing recovery should pick up speed

Diane Coyle  
Economics Editor

Mortgage lending by high street banks and building societies increased last month after falling slightly in November and December. The latest figures suggest that the pressures driving house prices up for the past year are still present despite signs of a pause at the tail end of last year.

Predicting the outlook for the housing market this year is made difficult by the contradiction between wide anecdotal evidence of big price rises, gazumping and other late-Eighties types of experience and the statistics which show a stately pace of recovery.

House prices might have made a comeback as a hot topic of conversation at dinner parties, but the mortgage lenders are keen to emphasise that there is no danger of revisiting the excesses of the last boom. Adrian Coles, director-general of the Building Societies Association, said yesterday: "There is no boom going on. The market is much patchier than it was in the 1980s."

"Although the recovery is now well established, it is progressing at a more moderate

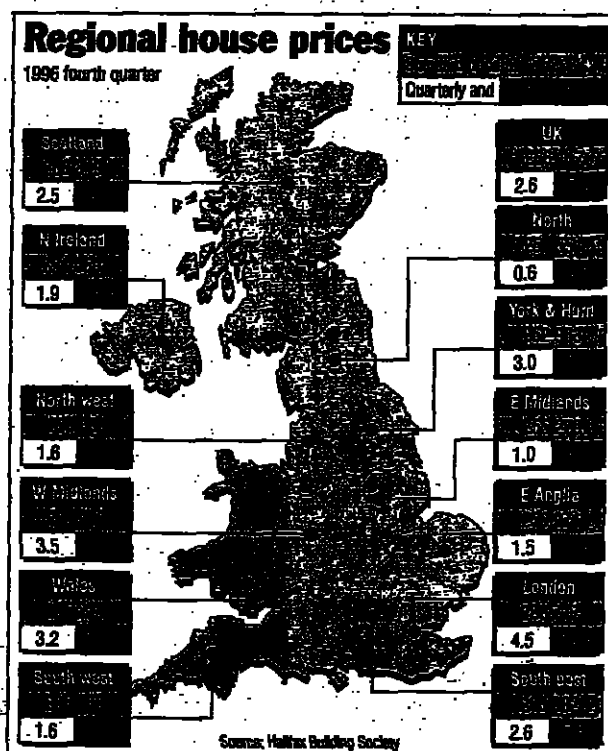
pace than some commentators were predicting."

Both remarks find support in recent evidence. Yesterday's figures showed a small monthly increase in new loans by building societies to just over £1.2bn, a level 29 per cent higher than a year earlier. Banks' mortgage lending climbed to £771m, 47 per cent higher than their lending last January.

A small decline in the amount of new loans approved but not yet made by building societies cast a slight shadow over these robust figures, however. Some analysts suggested that uncertainty about interest rates in the run-up to the general election could be holding back demand.

So far the recovery in house prices has been heavily weighted towards London, the South-east and Northern Ireland. The annual rate of increase of nearly 15 per cent in Greater London at the end of last year was twice the national average. Both Halifax and Nationwide reported a small drop in house prices in January, but the most buoyant regions bucked the trend.

Many economists argue that the housing slump during the first half of the 1990s left psy-



chological scars, while low inflation also makes property a less attractive investment. They reckon this means there is no danger of anything more than a steady recovery with pockets of excess.

Others think this overlooks the fundamental economics of the housing market.

David Miles, professor of economics at Imperial College, London, said: "House prices are about 20 per cent undervalued compared to their long-run trend."

With a fixed supply of land and rising costs of house-building combined with demographic pressure for more homes, over long periods house prices have grown at about the same pace as the economy as a whole.

Other indicators, such as the ratio of house prices to average earnings, suggest that prices remain low even after

last year's 7.4 per cent average increase.

Professor Miles predicted that prices could rise more sharply this year than last. "The fact that they have started to rise means people who want to buy will try to do it quickly, whereas sellers will carry on asking for a better price," he said.

This ties in with a recent survey of estate agents from the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, which complained of the shortage of properties up for sale.

With consumer confidence at its highest since August 1988, unemployment falling, wage increases picking up and the prospect of more than £22bn in handouts of free shares by building societies during the next 12 to 18 months, there must be a good chance of a more than moderate housing recovery.

# Labour outlines single currency criteria for joining in 'first wave'

Yvette Cooper

Gordon Brown, Labour's Shadow Chancellor, yesterday set down five criteria on which a Labour government would decide whether to join a single currency. Speaking in Washington to the US Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin, Mr Brown said: "If the economic conditions are right, we will retain the option of joining ... in the first wave."

Mr Brown said that Labour would look at the impact of EMU on investment, on financial services and on employment. He would also consider whether countries were at different stages in the economic cycle, and whether the stability pact was sufficiently flexible.

But the five criteria do not yet clearly determine whether Labour would join in the first wave or not. Graham Bishop of Salomon Brothers said: "On balance these criteria will en-

hance the chances of the Labour Party joining EMU." However, Michael Lewis of Deutsche Morgan Grenfell said: "These criteria form a more rigorous test; they would push you away from joining in the first wave and towards waiting to see how EMU panned out."

Mr Brown's first criterion is to "examine the likely impact on investment by British firms ... and on inward investment". Fears are already growing that an opted out Britain could lose inward investment as companies such as Toyota consider relocation within the euro-zone. Moreover, if the euro is a strong currency, interest rates in Britain are likely to be higher than in the euro-zone, discouraging investment by British companies, too. The risk of lower investment, growth and job creation outside EMU would, according to Mr Bishop, be "bound to have a significant

impact on a party that cares about unemployment". But Mr Lewis argues that concern for investment would not necessarily lead to early membership: "That's more a long-term consideration."

Mr Brown also plans to consider "the effect on our financial services". However, a recent report by David Currie for the Economist Intelligence Unit argues that financial services should in fact do well inside or outside EMU so long as they prepare properly, keeping Mr Brown's options wide open.

The Shadow Chancellor said, thirdly, "we will examine whether European countries are at different stages of the economic cycle". Britain is currently in its fifth year of economic growth, while the German economy actually shrank in the last few months of 1996. According to Michael Lewis, "this condition could delay Britain's

entry for some time." However, the single currency could itself speed the integration of economies and reduce the need for separate monetary policies across the union.

The fourth Labour criterion is to examine whether there is sufficient flexibility in the Dublin stability pact to cope with economic shocks. As the David Currie report points out, unable to use monetary policy to react to local economic problems, governments will need the freedom to adjust borrowing to tide them through bad times. A strict interpretation of the stability pact - as the Germans prefer - would remove much of that flexibility. Michael Lewis said, "it looks as though Labour wants to wait and see how much discretion national governments will have".

Finally Mr Brown's said he would judge the impact of EMU on employment levels.

# Stationery Office may make job cuts

Chris Goddard  
Business Correspondent

Her Majesty's Stationery Office, the privatised company which prints most Government publications, is about to announce 400 compulsory redundancies, the Labour Party claimed yesterday. HMSO, now renamed the Stationery Office, was sold last October for £54m, a third of its original asking price, to Electra Fleming, the venture capitalist group which stands to make a £104m profit out of this week's sale of Eversholt, one of the privatised rail leasing companies. Electra's management team is thought to have made personal profits of £5.5m from the deal.

Last November the National Publishing Group, the new company formed by Electra to bid for HMSO, announced 940 job cuts out of a total workforce of 2,500. Managers said at the time they hoped most of the job losses would be through a voluntary redundancy programme.

Hundreds of workers have already left the company, but Labour said around 400 staff would now have to be made compulsorily redundant to meet the target.

Unions are already thought to have been briefed by management on the cuts. The statutory notice period for the job cuts runs out at the weekend

and it is thought the plans could be revealed to staff today.

Derek Foster, shadow Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, said: "This comes just hours after Electra Fleming have walked away with massive profits from the rail sell-off. It's just blind profiteering of the most sinister kind."

Around 200 of the compulsory job cuts are thought to be at the office's main site in Norwich. Labour also said the future of the company's Manchester factory, which prints most passports, was under threat following a rival bid for the work from De La Rue, the bank note printing giant.

A spokesman for the Stationery Office said in a statement last night: "At this point we cannot confirm the number of compulsory redundancies which may ultimately be required as we continue to accept volunteers." The statement insisted the total number of compulsory job cuts was likely to be lower, around "15-20 per cent of the total 940". However, it also said about 100 compulsory job losses had already taken place at sites with a shorter consultation period.

# Pension victims still waiting for compensation

Nic Cunniff  
Personal Finance Editor

The process of compensating victims of the pension transfer scandal is still only moving at a snail's pace with the release yesterday of figures showing that 6,800 people have so far received redress, out of 478,000 priority cases identified.

The Personal Investment Authority, the financial regulator, yesterday said the number of people compensated was up from the 4,000 or so dealt with by September last year.

A PIA spokesman said: "Whilst the figures indicate that the pace of the review remains too slow, they do not take account of the measures announced in November last year to speed the process up."

He said that while many companies were proceeding with reviews of pension transfer cases faster than before, some were dragging their heels. Disciplinary action against the laggards was a strong possibility, the spokesman said.

The PIA's latest statistics come more than two years after the senior City regulator, the Securities and Investments Board, issued a report showing that up to 1.5 million people may have been mis-sold a personal pension. However, a PIA deadline for all urgent cases to

be dealt with by December 1995 collapsed in acrimony as the regulator was forced into a climb-down with its members over the letters they sent to potential victims. The PIA also had to wait months until a critical court case was resolved with independent financial advisers.

Last October, a PIA memo leaked to *The Independent* showed some companies with tens of thousands of cases on their books had barely dealt with more than a handful.

Since then, the PIA has tried to adopt a new get-tough approach, calling in executives from the worst-offending companies and insisting they resolve 90 per cent of their cases by the end of this year.

Of the total cases identified as priorities, 361,000 came from life companies and 64,000 from the insurance arms of big banks and building societies. Financial advisers have contributed about 53,000 cases. Of this last group, compensation has been offered to only 305 people.

A Prudential spokesman said yesterday: "We have made considerable progress in the past few months and have cleared the majority of cases as not requiring compensation."

"We are now working through the cases we have identified as needing review as quickly as possible."

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# Grantchester stacks up warehouses

Followers of Nigel Wray, the Midlands-based investor behind success stories such as Carlin Communications and Singer & Friedlander, will be interested in his latest little venture. Last year his Burford property group latched onto Grantchester Holdings, a specialist property developer which claims to have built a commanding position in edge-of-town retail developments since its foundation seven years ago. In November Burford demerged Grantchester, having injected a couple of retail parks in Huddersfield and Falkirk, leaving it with a 24 per cent stake in the enlarged group. Since then, the shares have risen almost in a straight line from the launch price of 100p to yesterday's 165p, up another 3.5p.

In the tradition of Mr Wray, who remains a non-executive director, investors have not had to wait long for Grantchester's next blockbuster deal. Yesterday, the group announced £121m of acquisitions and a £65m rights issue which will mean it has tripled the size of its portfolio to £220m in three months since flotation and doubled the number of units to 100. Shareholders are being offered the new shares at 137p on a seven-for-10 basis.

The centrepiece of the latest deal is the £73.3m acquisition from the development arm of J Sainsbury of seven warehouse development schemes, ranging from Chester to East London, via Swansea and Birmingham. The group is stumping up an extra £16.2m for the more mature former Burford property in Huddersfield, over which it has an option, bringing the total cost of that deal to £21.6m. Grantchester is also extending its reach into the North with a £9.25m deal for a warehouse scheme in Middlesbrough and a couple of retail parks in the central belt of Scotland which are being acquired from Morrison Construction for £23.1m.

Analysts said the deals, being done on yields ranging from 6.6 per cent for the Sainsbury properties to 8 per cent in Middlesbrough, were not exceptional for this type of asset. But Paul Wright, executive chairman, is extremely optimistic that he can squeeze much more out of them.

He points out that recent deals for similar out-of-town warehouses have been done at yields of 5 per cent or below. More importantly, the average rent being paid by Grantchester's blue-chip tenants is still under £10 a square foot. Given lettings done at double that rate in areas as diverse as Croydon, Leicester and Edinburgh, there is clearly the potential to raise that significantly. By means of five-yearly rent reviews and buying out "underperforming" leases, he reckons Grantchester can achieve rent increases of around 25 per cent a year across the portfolio.

Even given initial success on pre-lettings at Huddersfield and the 20 per cent growth notched up over the past three years, that is a tall order. With the shares

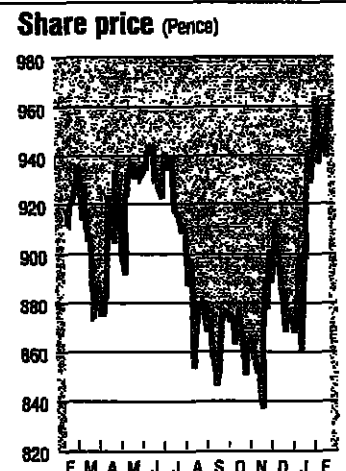
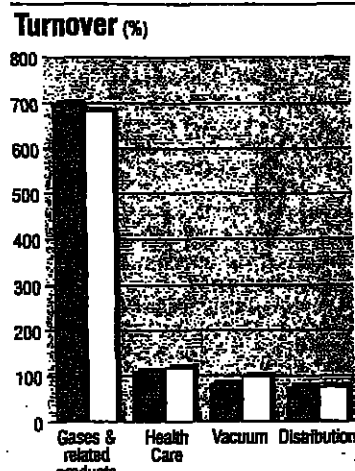
## THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY TOM STEVENSON

### BOC: At a glance

Market value: £4,640m, share price 958.5p

Trading record	1994	1995	1996	1996
		full year		First quarter
Turnover (£m)	6,292	6,814	6,814	1,683
Pre-tax profits (£m)	253.1	402.2	444.9	100.8
Earnings per share (pence)	23.82	37.97	41.74	10.22
Dividends per share (pence)	23.2	24.8	27	N/A



on a substantial premium to Charterhouse Tilney's net assets per share forecast of 128p for this year and 142p next, they should not be chased.

### Dramatic day for BOC

BOC has made much of a drive to explain its diverse industrial gases, healthcare and distribution businesses to investors and, judging by yesterday's share price movement, the message is finally getting through.

The headline figures looked bad as BOC warned that the impact of the 25 per cent surge in the value of the pound had knocked £10m off operating profits in the three months to December. Pre-tax profits edged up by less than 2 per cent in the first quarter to £102.7m. Turnover, excluding BOC's share of related undertakings, was 1 per cent lower at £893.9m. If sterling stays at current levels, the total impact on full-year profits would be around £35m and the markets took immediate fright yesterday with the shares down 10p at one point.

Drama is not a word normally asso-

ciated with BOC, yet by the close of trading the shares had staged a remarkable turnaround, ending the day with a rise of 21.5p to 959.5p.

The devil, as always with BOC, is in the detail and behind the grim-looking sterling impact lies an encouraging trend in underlying profitability. Above £22m of the anticipated full-year hit from the high pound relates to the translation of dollar and other currencies into sterling. The actual cash impact is likely to be smaller, in the region of £15m.

Another reason for the share price surge was interest from US investors since last autumn's listing in New York. Meanwhile, the other two problem areas, the Edwards vacuum business and healthcare operations, are being tackled. Last year the shares plunged on the world-wide collapse in the computer memory chip market, which the vacuum business depends upon for its earnings. Now it would appear to be close to bottom. BOC also looks to be getting over the 1993 loss of the patent on its anaesthetic drug, Forane. Five years ago Forane made annual profits of £123m, while the rest of the healthcare division lost £24m. Last year Forane's earnings were down to £20m, while the other businesses made £53m.

And behind it all lies the sleeping giant, the gases division, which accounts for the lion's share of profits. BOC predicts world demand growth for gases will be some 2 per cent higher than GDP growth. BOC's presence in the Far East is strong, while it has plenty of opportunity to grow in continental Europe. Including sterling's impact, expect profits this year to be static at £450m, with earnings per share of 58p and a prospective p/e ratio of 16. About right.

### Verity's hi-fi is high-risk

Verity is the ultimate share for hi-fi anoraks. With names such as Wharfedale and Quad, the group's brands sound like a roll-call of the cream of British audio equipment. But they did not prevent the group coming to the brink of collapse in 1993 after three years of mounting losses and a torrent of cash calls.

Farad Azima, parachuted in as chief executive after his Mission amplifiers to CD players group was reversed into Verity in 1993, dragged the group back into the black, but what has really ignited the shares are the prospects for its revolutionary NXT flat speaker technology. Last autumn, the price more than tripled after the group set up a separate subsidiary, New Transducers, to develop the ground-breaking product and hinted that industry giants such as Nokia and Panasonic could be interested in the technology.

Yesterday the shares added another 3.25p to a new peak of 43p, despite news of yet another cash call for £8.65m, after the group revealed that NEC, the Japanese consumer electronics group, had become the first to sign a licence agreement for NXT. Mr Azima is suggesting there could be plenty more where that came from.

Analysts expect the NEC deal alone could bring in royalties in its first year of up to \$1.5m and further discussions are taking place with "major companies" in Europe, the US, Japan and South Korea. The list of applications for a loudspeaker less than 1mm thick which produces hi-fi quality sound are virtually endless, ranging from laptop computers to transport and architectural uses. Sir Norman Foster's eponymous architectural practice is looking at the possibilities in concert halls, stations and the like.

The question will be whether Verity can handle all this. First-half results to December showed the group plunging back into the red with a loss of £1.43m replacing profits of £1.24m. New Transducers racked up development costs of £1.47m and the redirection of resources to NXT caused trading profits to halve. Full-year profits are expected to be down £1m at £1.6m. High risk, but the new shares at 36p are worth a punt.

# Speedy BSE test pushes up Proteus shares

Magnus Grimmond

Shares in the biotechnology sector sparked into life yesterday on a string of announcements from some of its smaller constituents. Proteus International's shares leapt 17p to 57.5p after it announced its Irish research partner had successfully developed a speedier test for BSE.

Shield Diagnostics' share price was also strong, rising 80p to 416.5p, after it revealed a research tie-up with Abbott Laboratories, the US pharmaceuticals group. However, investors reacted negatively to news that plans by Phytopharm to develop a plant-based cure for eczema would be delayed by around two years. The shares fell 23p to 185.5p.

Proteus said Enter Scientific, an Irish licensee, had produced a high-throughput test for BSE based on a reagent produced by the British firm which

had been validated by the Irish Department of Agriculture. David Gratton, chairman, said the department's agricultural veterinary research laboratory was "happy to validate that this test does successfully discriminate between positive and negative BSE carcasses".

The post-mortem test was capable of processing 1,000 samples at a time and could be used in slaughterhouses, he said. Proteus went through a bad patch last year after raising £9.5m in a rights issue and seeing then chief executive Jurek Sikorski resign soon after. But Mr Gratton said Proteus had signed a deal with Enter which would net Proteus 12.5 per cent of any revenues earned from the test, which analysts believe could give the company income running into seven figures.

Shield, meanwhile, said it had signed an exploratory research agreement with the di-

agnostics division of Abbott Laboratories. This would give it access to Abbott's instruments, reagents and training in developing new hospital diagnostic tests, the company said.

The problems of Phytopharm, whose technology is based on Chinese herbal remedies, concern its Zemaiphyte drug for severe atopic eczema, a skin complaint. UK approval for the product, currently in phase III trials with 150 patients, will be delayed for around 18 months after US tests begin in September, according to Richard Dixey, chief executive.

This was due to concerns expressed by the British Medicines Control Agency.

But Mr Dixey played down the delays, saying they would help improve the chances for the drug, given that regulators on both sides of the Atlantic were now in closer liaison and the company had a clearer target to aim for.

## Primary Management consortium wins £200m Army contract



A consortium led by Primary Management, which is owned by the Gardner Merchant contract catering company, has won a £200m contract to manage non-military operations and work services at Aldershot Garrison. The deal will save the Army £32m.

# Home credit boosts Provident

Peter Rodgers  
Financial Editor

Provident Financial yesterday proved for the fifth year running that the door-to-door lending business is a money-spinner with high margins by making a profit before tax of £118.5m, a 17 per cent increase on the year before.

John van Kuffeler, chief executive, said the company was doing so well it was looking at the possibility of share buybacks and other ways of improving shareholder value. It was also regularly looking at potential takeover propositions, he said.

Provident, based in Bradford, specialises in home credit, which is collected weekly by agents. It has 1.3 million customers, mostly at the lower end of the income scale. The bulk of the group pre-tax profit came from the home credit division, which made £114.4m, an increase of 21 per cent.

This was achieved with much higher interest rates than conventional lenders charge. The company puts this down to the high administration costs of collecting repayments on small loans door-to-door. However, its margins have been improving.

Provident provided £670m of credit for customers last year but their repayments totalled £909m, 35 per cent more. The annual percentage rate works out at well over 50 per cent. With 9 per cent more customers last year, the agent network was expanded by more than 700 to nearly 9,900. Loan growth last year was 14.6 per cent. Bad debts increased less than 5 per cent to £34.3m.

The company's branch network has now been replaced by regional administration centres and low-cost local interview rooms for use by agents.

Profits from the insurance business, which specialises in women drivers, second cars and third-party insurance for older cars, fell £2.7m to £10.6m. An increase in premiums slashed the number of policyholders from 802,000 to 595,000.

Provident said it took longer to settle claims compared with previous years. With slower payouts, cash and investments remained high and the income from these funds helped maintain insurance profits.

The dividend was raised 18 per cent to 16.5p a share. The shares rose 1p to 553.5p.

## IN BRIEF

• The Government's plans to disburse accountants from moving their firms offshore to Jersey were published yesterday, in a consultation paper on a new form of limited liability partnership. The proposal is aimed at limiting the personal risks of partners in accountancy firms when they are sued for damages. Ian Lang, President of the Board of Trade, said "limited liability partnership is already widely available in the USA and in an increasing number of other countries. It should be available in the UK too." The closing date for responses is 16 May.

• A US court yesterday ruled that damages awarded against GKN last year might be reduced by up to 30 per cent. Last December a North Carolina jury awarded \$347m (£216m) in damages against GKN for allegedly defrauding franchise operators of its Meineke Discount Mufflers chain. The parties have been directed to try to agree by next Wednesday a formula for allocating the damages to individual class members. GKN is expected to appeal.

• Lloyd's of London has won its first court victory against rebel names who refused to join last year's £3.2bn rescue plan. A summary judgment in the High Court against two members, Dennis Leighs and David Wilkinson, dismissed their claims that they were not liable to pay money into Equitas, the reinsurance vehicle used for the rescue of the insurance market. Philip Holden, Lloyd's chief debt collector, said: "This enables Lloyd's to pursue all non-acceptors of the settlement."

• Employers are continuing to improve voluntarily the benefits they provide for members of occupational pension schemes, according to the 22nd NAPF annual survey. Higher payments, more pensions for spouses and dependents and shorter waiting periods to join occupational schemes are among the improvements. Seventy-five per cent of schemes were preparing an increased payment in 1996 compared with 30 per cent in 1975. Contrary to widespread reports, there had not been no wholesale move from final survey to money purchase schemes, the report adds.

### Company Results

	Turnover	Pre-tax	EPS	Dividend
Arcon Int'l (F)	1.6m (1.4m)	40.2m (30.4m)	0.09p (-0.36p)	- (-)
BOC (Q)	694m (610m)	103m (101m)	13.4p (12.3p)	nil (-)
Swirex Leisure (F)	2.2m (2.1m)	0.26m (0.23m)	23.1p (20.4p)	5p (+)
Carlsberg (Shipping) (F)	12.7m (12.6m)	1.02m (0.92m)	10.82p (10.75p)	3.5p (2p)
City Site Estates (F)	- (-)	0.11m (0.09m)	1.58p (1.21p)	nil (-)
Comstar Trust (F)	- (-)	0.91m (0.78m)	4.04p (3.85p)	3p (+)
Emmett Group (FF)	2.16m (0.64m)	-0.97m (-0.11m)	-6.34p (-2p)	nil (-)
Provident Financial (F)	- (-)	118m (101m)	26.31p (25.17p)	16.5p
Road Group (F)	1.08m (1.7m)	727m (408m)	24.1p (22.1p)	15p (11p)
Verity Group (F)	23.6m (23.1m)	1.42m (1.24m)	4.59p (3.4p)	nil (-)

(F) - Final (FF) - Interim (F) Comparative figures are for 17 months. Pre-tax figure is pre-exceptional

# Receivers are called in at Scottish Pride

Nigel Cope

The milk market turned sour yesterday for Scottish Pride, the former processing arm of the Scottish Milk Marketing Board, when it appointed receivers at two of its main trading subsidiaries.

The company had been in talks to sell its business to Robert Wiseman Dairies in a deal which would have given Wiseman 80 per cent of the Scottish market. However, the company had been unable to reach commercially acceptable undertakings with the Office of Fair Trading.

Scottish Pride's shares were suspended at 42.5p yesterday morning pending clarification of the company's financial position. Receivers were later appointed to the two main trading subsidiaries, Scottish Pride and Scottish Pride Foods.

The company has debts of £30m and last month reported increased half-year losses of £2.45m. It has been suffering from a lack of capital, inefficient plants and an oversupplied market. The receivers said substantial losses in the fresh food sector and intense competition to supply supermarkets and discount retailers had been key causes of the problems. The final straw was the defection of two key customers, including

Kwik Save, which stopped its dealings with Scottish Pride on Monday.

Blair Nimmo, on behalf of accountants KPMG, said: "The company has been in discussion with a number of interested parties for the sale of its trading activities. The request for the appointment of a receiver was made when, against a background of rapidly deteriorating trading, it became clear the company could not be confident that transactions for the sale of the activities would be achieved on satisfactory terms within a reasonable period of time."

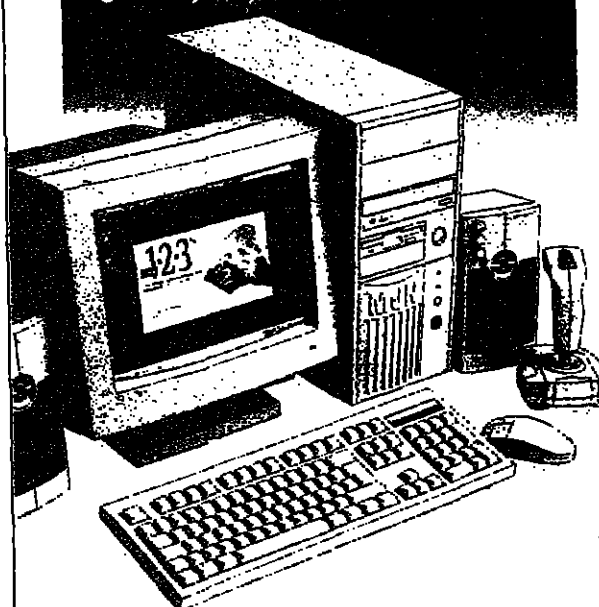
Though Scottish Pride itself is not in receivership it is itself limited assets. The company is based in Glasgow and employs 736 staff at 15 production and distribution sites throughout Scotland and the North of England. Group sales last year were £96m. KPMG said there would be no immediate redundancies but could give no guarantees on future job security.

Scottish Pride is listed on the Alternative Investment Market. The vast majority of its shareholders are farmers who produce milk for the company.

KPMG will continue to trade the Scottish Pride businesses while undertaking a financial review. The main objective was to sell the business as a going concern, KPMG said.

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# market report / shares

## Taking Stock

## MARKET REPORT

PATRICK TOOHER

# Asda slips up after NatWest issues a downgrade



## Data Bank

FTSE 100	4356.1	-1.3
FTSE 250	4633.5	+13.1
FTSE 350	2150.6	+0.8
SEAQ VOLUME	1141.6m shares	
50,019 bargains		
Gifts Index	96.51	-0.11

## Share spotlight



NatWest dropped a banana skin in the path of Asda's share yesterday, cutting its profit forecasts for the food retailer by up to 10 per cent and changing its recommendation from hold to reduce.

Under Archie Norman's "Renewal" programme Asda averted financial collapse. But the broker sees a levelling off in margins as cost pressures mount and underlying sales growth slows from almost 10 per cent to the industry norm of 4 per cent in 1998/99.

There is also a feeling that Asda's unexpected bid for Granada's Welcome Break motorway service stations gives the lie to the food retailer's claim that its core business was performing well.

Sector watchers will recall that Iceland rather let the cat out of the bag on current trading a year ago when it lined up an approach for Littlewoods, the privately owned pools and

department store empire. Iceland's shares have been in the dog-house ever since.

While Asda's problems are nowhere near as serious, NatWest reckons the shares are worth closer to 100p than the 113.5p, down 3.25p, they closed at last night.

The FTSE 100 retreated from a new trading high of 4362.4 to close 1.3 lower at 4356.1 in response to a weak opening on Wall Street.

Rank Group, under new chief executive Andrew Hearn, led the way among blue chips, adding 7p to 442p on the back of full-year results and plans to buy back up to 10 per cent of its shares.

Also sought was British Airways, up 16.5p to 634.5p on good profits from Australian airline Quantas, where BA has a 25 per cent stake.

One is technical, with chartists noting the positive formation of a "golden cross" where the line showing the 38-day moving average crosses the 200-day moving average line on the up.

Another relates to the planned introduction of the euro in 1999. This is likely to more than mop up capacity among European rivals, leaving De La Rue free to enjoy better margins in its core third world markets.

P&P's good run continued, the shares adding 2.5p to 221.5p despite vice-chairman Peter Fisher cutting his stake in the computer services group. Mr Fisher sold 2.1 million

shares at 220.5p on Wednesday, leaving him with 5.63 million, or a 7.03 per cent stake.

The deal marks another symbolic chapter in P&P's evolution. Mr Fisher and his former wife Pam founded the company in 1979 as a distributor of computers. The initials of their christian names gave the company its moniker.

But last week a more broadly based P&P announced plans to change its name to Skillsgroup as it unveiled a 14 per cent increase in full-year profits.

£7m, the bulk of which will come from the grant.

But Manchester United remained out of favour, falling another 13p to 637.5p despite consolidating its lead at the top of the Premier League with an away win at Arsenal on Wednesday night. Leeds United, stuffed 4-0 by Liverpool, fared better as shares in parent company Caspian held at 38p.

Shares in EasyNet, the Internet service provider, advanced 4p to 66.5p. Losses in the year to December widened to £970,000 but the company said the number of corporate and consumer customers rose by over 400 per cent.

Fish and chip shop chain Harry Ramsden's served up a 2.5p gain to close at 347.5p as a director, M J Barnes, raised £688,000 by exercising and selling options on 200,000 shares at 3.44p, leaving him with a 1.43 per cent stake.

PSD, the recruitment services group, had a bright start to life on the stock market. Placed by Charterhouse Tilney at 220p, the shares sky-rocketed to close at 288.5p, valuing the company at about £70m. Volume was a chunky 3.47 million shares, or 14 per cent of the issued equity.

Forvain, the synthetic clothing maker that issued two profit warnings last year, recouped some of Wednesday's losses when the company revealed a 19 per cent drop in profits.

The shares rose 5p to 255p as house broker Reeson Gregory upgraded its recommendation to buy with earnings of 18.1p pencilled in for this year, implying a price/earnings ratio of 14. The broker feels significant recovery this year justifies a premium rating to the market.

## Share Price Data

Prices are in sterling except where stated. The yield is last year's dividend, grossed up by 20 per cent, as a percentage of the share price. The price/earnings (P/E) ratio is the share price divided by last year's earnings per share, excluding exceptional items. Other details: 1 Ex rights; 2 Ex dividend; 3 Ex all; 4 Unlisted Securities Market; 5 Suspended; 6 Partly Paid; 7 Non Paid Shares; 8 A.M. Stock. Source: FT Information

## The Independent Index

The index allows you to access real-time share prices by phone from London Stock Exchange. Simply dial 0800 123 333, and when prompted to do so, enter the 4-digit code given next to each share. To access the latest financial reports dial 0800 123 333 followed by one of the two-digit codes below.

Market leaders: Top 20 volumes							
Stock	Vol'000	Stock	Vol'000	Stock	Vol'000		
Blocco	977000	Heron	106000	GLS	86000	Costa Vello	76000
Cavella TSB	100000	BS	100000	Rolls Royce	80000	BBA	69000
British Steel	100000	Bank of Scotland	100000	Shell Int.	70000	Gurness	69000
Turkline	100000	Rank Group	100000	Sains	70000	BP	69000
Harbourside Club	100000	BT	100000	ASDA Group	75000	Sainsbury	69000

FTSE 100 Index hour by hour		
Open 4384.8 down 75	11.00 4387.0 down 0.4	14.00 4391.4 down 6.0
06.00 4395.8 down 6.9	12.00 4398.5 up 2.1	15.00 4346.8 down 5.5
10.00 4398.8 down 68	13.00 4392.9 up 2.4	16.00 4389.9 down 5.5
		Close 4356.1 down 1.3

## Market leaders: Top 20 volumes

Stock	Volume	Stock	Volume	Stock	Volume
British Telecom	97,000,000	British Airways	10,000,000	British Petroleum	10,000,000
Shell	10,000,000	British Gas	10,000,000	British Airways	10,000,000
British Airways	10,000,000	British Airways	10,000,000	British Airways	10,000,000

## FTSE 100 Index hour by hour

Open	High	Low	Close
4348.8 down 78	4357.0 down 04	4348.8 down 78	4356.1 down 1.3
4350.5 up 21	4359.5 up 21	4350.5 up 21	4356.1 down 1.3
4358.8 down 06	4359.5 up 24	4358.8 down 06	4356.1 down 1.3

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Alcoholic Beverages	Bankers, Merchant	Bank, Retail	Engineering Vehicles	Extractive Industries	Food Manufacturers	Food Retailers	Health Care	Household Goods	Investment Trusts	Leisure & Hotels	Life Assurance	Media	Property	Support Services	Telecommunications	Textiles & Apparel	Tobacco	Transport	Utilities	Water	Rights Issues	Recent Issues
Alcoholic Beverages	Bankers, Merchant	Bank, Retail	Engineering Vehicles	Extractive Industries	Food Manufacturers	Food Retailers	Health Care	Household Goods	Investment Trusts	Leisure & Hotels	Life Assurance	Media	Property	Support Services	Telecommunications	Textiles & Apparel	Tobacco	Transport	Utilities	Water	Rights Issues	Recent Issues



## business

# How virtual banks are close to becoming reality

A revolution is under way in the banking industry which by the turn of the century will see the birth of "virtual banks", according to David Llewellyn, professor of money and banking at Loughborough University.

"Over the next 10 years we'll see more structural change in the banking industry and more change in the business that banks do... than we've seen in the last 50 to 60 years," he predicts.

According to Professor Llewellyn, the upheaval will be dramatic even in the last three years of this century. It is already in progress, signalled by the arrival of new entrants, such as the supermarkets, which are just beginning to offer banking products.

Sainsbury's Bank, launched this week, is the most significant attempt by a supermarket to get into banking. In conjunction with Bank of Scotland, Sainsbury's is promising to pay some of the highest rates on savings accounts in the country.

Little wonder, then, that some of the best known banking names on the high street are becoming just a little worried about what the future holds.

Professor Llewellyn thinks they should be concerned, but he also thinks they should be pairing up with the supermarket players.

"These are very powerful pressures on the banking industry. Some banks are going to get into trouble," he said yesterday at a seminar on banking in the 21st century organised by NCR.

The cause for concern is not that the supermarkets will snatch all the business. "These new guys will never get big market shares but that's not what their damage is going to be. Their damage is taking away the juicy bits," said Professor Llewellyn.

The point being that the supermarkets will launch the products that are most profitable and turn their backs on those that cause problems for the high street banks. Because they are not lumbered with an

Supermarket accounts are just the start of a revolution in handling our money, writes Jill Treanor

expensive branch network, the supermarkets can have a serious impact on banks' pricing of products and therefore their profitability.

Professor Llewellyn argued that the supermarkets, and for that matter any other non-banking institution that decides to dabble in the banking field, have an advantage at the outset because their fixed costs of doing business are very low.

This is because they are subcontracting all their banking operations. In the case of Sainsbury's it is Bank of Scotland. Safeway has linked up with Abbey National and Tesco, which had teamed up with NatWest, is now tied to Royal Bank of Scotland.

Other new entrants may be waiting the wings. For instance, Professor Llewellyn thinks

British Telecom, which he describes as having a branch network in every household in the country, could pose a real challenge.

The supermarket groups also have a big advantage in that they can swiftly and cheaply quit the banking business if it proves unprofitable or is simply too much trouble.

Professor Llewellyn thinks banks are on a fast track to becoming "virtual", where they act as little more than a computer interface with customers.

The revolution, he predicts, will also mean banks subcontracting their businesses and outsourcing operations. This is not just because of the new competitors but also because of technological advances and regulatory changes.

"I really do believe we're at

a defining point in the evolution of the banking industry," he says.

Banks, finally, are catching up with other industries. Just as British Airways contracts out its catering services or Jaguar uses a vast array of suppliers to provide the products for its cars, so banks will do the same.

Supermarkets have been allowed to enter the banking industry because the barriers have been eroded. New technology has been one prime factor and the high street banks have helped the process by closing thousands of branches and demonstrating that they are no longer essential.

The ultimate technological development is banking on the Internet, which computer experts predict is one of the biggest threats to the traditional sector.

In five years, Professor Llewellyn sees banks busy monitoring the suppliers to which they have outsourced their activities, just like British Airways juggles the terms on which it is supplied with goods and services.

But he is aware of a stark anomaly. While the cut-throat competition and continuing cost-cutting will drive banks to become virtual or "contract banks", it could also lead to further consolidation in the industry.

He believes the two images can co-exist, with some banks following the big is beautiful route to take advantage of economies of scale, while others take the route of the contract bank.

"There are several small building societies which have a good future because they are going to become virtual," Professor Llewellyn said.

For him the importance of these developments is their potential to do damage to the traditional bank. Banks that succeed will be those that are prepared to change.

Diversification could be one way. The fastest route here would be to beat the supermarkets at their own game and buy one outright - if you can't beat them join them.

# Twenty British women and 7,000 Penguins head for the North Pole

Lucy Roberts, former author of this esteemed diary column and part-time marathon runner, is about to walk to the North Pole.

Ms Roberts is part of a 20-strong group of British women who are taking part in the McVie's Penguin Polar Relay. Five teams of four will take it in turn to walk set distances between northern Canada and the North Pole, and Ms Roberts is part of the group which will reach the final destination, Union Jack in hand.

The first team leaves for training in Resolute Bay, Canada, this weekend. The participants were selected from more than 60 applicants who had to undergo two weekends of gruelling "SAS-style training", including one on Dartmoor.

"It was a hideous experience," recalls Ms Roberts, currently employed by Lighting Design International, a domestic lighting company. "After each squad has completed its allotted distance, it will be picked up by plane and the next lot starts. We're making history - we will be the first British women to get to the North Pole," says our intrepid explorer.

One American woman and one Japanese woman made it in mixed teams, but they had dogs to pull them.

"We will have skis and 150-pound sleds. The wind chill factor will take the temperature down to about minus 70, so it'll be pretty cold," she says.

The main sponsor is McVie's, which has provided 7,000 Penguin bars for the women. This is despite the fact that there are no live penguins anywhere near the North Pole. "We all have to eat four bars a day," says Ms Roberts.

Another sponsor is Debenhams, which will supply vital thermal underwear for the party.

Isn't Ms Roberts worried about losing fingers and toes to frost bite? "Not at all. I'll do whatever it takes to get to the North Pole," she replies

## PEOPLE & BUSINESS



Unfamiliar territory: penguins prefer southern climes

indomitably. When she gets there at the end of May, weather permitting, she's off to do a leg of the Tour de France. I'm off to the pub.

Richard Compton-Burnett has left NM Rothschild after nine years to join hi-tech corporate finance boutique NewMedia Investors. In fact, a former shop manager is a more accurate description - it's just him and the firm's founder, Tom Teichman.

Hungarian-born Mr Teichman launched the business when he resigned from Maid

hi-tech and telecoms companies that need capital. Mr Compton-Burnett, a trained accountant, says they will look at venture capital deals as well as AIM and full listings.

The biggest hotel chain in the world is about to be bought. Thomas R. Oliver has been appointed chief executive officer of Holiday Inn Worldwide on the retirement of Bryan Langton.

The company, owned by Bass, has more than 2,200 hotels in 60 countries, so Mr Oliver, an American who lives in Holiday Inn's head office town of Atlanta, Georgia, will have a busy time of it.

Mr Langton, a Brit who has just turned 60, has already extended his stay at the top beyond retirement age in order to give time for a replacement to be found. Mr Langton joined Bass in 1971 and the brewing group's board in 1985. Four years after that Bass bought Holiday Inn.

The BBC has just appointed a new transport correspondent, Simon Montague. Mr Montague, the weatherbeaten heart-throb of BBC reporting, turns out to be an experienced sea dog.

Nuclear Electric snapped him up to join a round-the-world yacht race. In fact, he was on the Nuclear Electric yacht when interviews for the Beeb job were being held and was interviewed on the boat via a satellite link.

It's official: Tony Blair's New Labour Party is the party of business. On Wednesday Hugh Aldous, managing partner of accountants Robson Rhodes, presented Mr Blair with an award from Investors in People (IIP), a prize usually reserved for companies such as IBM and Mercury Asset Management.

IIP is a national quality standard awarded "to organisations for the training and development of their people". Labour is the first political party to receive it.

John Willcock

## Foreign Exchange Rates

Country	Spot	1 month	3 months
US	1.614	11.9	32.29
Canada	2.185	54.49	194.158
Germany	2.722	83.41	203.358
France	2.185	27.198	640.539
Italy	2.285	25.40	45.57
Spain	2.381	85.91	281.231
Japan	140.32	21.19	66.81
Belgium	56.248	16.10	42.36
Denmark	13.880	22.177	61.475
Netherlands	3.0577	82.74	240.225
Ireland	1.0253	5.1	15.10
Sweden	10.843	160.30	312.339
Norway	2.032	5.5	31.3
Switzerland	1.130	220.160	680.580
Australia	2.2907	10.16	15.25
South Africa	12.073	93.83	240.00
Hong Kong	4.0001	0.0	0.0
New Zealand	2.2314	64.71	155.188
Saudi Arabia	6.6435	0.0	0.0
Singapore	2.2986	0.0	0.0

## Other Spot Rates

Country	Sterling	Dollar
Argentina	16.185	0.0999
Australia	19.821	1.0576
Brazil	1.8827	1.0572
China	13.3581	8.2539
Egypt	3.4022	3.4022
France	2.2853	17.0700
Germany	2.2853	17.0700
Greece	4.2570	264.760
India	57.7769	35.2575
Italy	0.0687	0.0338

Forward rates quoted high to low are at a discount; rates quoted low to high are at a premium. "Dollar rates quoted as reciprocals. For the latest foreign exchange rates call 0891 123 3033. Cable cost 50p per minute (day) 45p (evening).

## Interest Rates

UK	600%	Germany	250%	US	8.75%	Japan	0.50%
Base Rate	5.00%	Discount	4.50%	Fed Funds	5.00%	Discount	2.50%
Intervention	3.5%	Canada	4.75%	10-Day Repo	5.00%	Switzerland	5.00%
Prime	5.75%	Netherlands	5.00%	Sweden	5.00%	Denmark	100%
Discount	2.5%	Denmark	5.00%	Poland	4.00%	Lombard	4.25%

## Bond Yields

Country	5yr yield %	10yr yield %	Country	5yr yield %	10yr yield %
UK	7.75	8.50	Netherlands	8.75	4.50
US	6.25	8.10	Spain	7.75	5.75
Germany	6.00	6.50	Belgium	6.75	5.75
France	5.50	6.25	Australia	8.00	4.50
			Sweden	5.00	5.50

## Money Market Rates

Overnight	7 Day	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	1 Year
Interbank	5.5	6.0	6.5	6.5	6.5
Bank of England	5.5	6.0	6.5	6.5	6.5
Discount Market Rates	6.0	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5
Prime Rate (Bank)	6.0	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5
Bank of America	6.0	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5

## Tourist Rates

Country	2 Buys	2 Buys	2 Buys
Australia	2.2400	France	6.8700
Canada	2.2400	Germany	6.8700
China	13.3581	Italy	3.4022
Denmark	3.4022	Japan	140.32
France	6.8700	Netherlands	3.0577
Germany	6.8700	Spain	2.0320
Italy	3.4022	Sweden	10.8430
Japan	140.32	Switzerland	1.1300
Netherlands	3.0577	USA	1.6140
Spain	2.0320		
Sweden	10.8430		
Switzerland	1.1300		
USA	1.6140		

## Liffe Financial Futures

Contract	Settlement price	High/Low for day	Est/Conts	Open Interest
Long GB	10.18	10.18	10.18	10.18
Short GB	10.18	10.18	10.18	10.18
Long US	10.18	10.18	10.18	10.18
Short US	10.18	10.18	10.18	10.18
Long Euro	10.18	10.18	10.18	10.18
Short Euro	10.18	10.18	10.18	10.18
Long Yen	10.18	10.18	10.18	10.18
Short Yen	10.18	10.18	10.18	10.18
Long Gold	10.18	10.18	10.18	10.18
Short Gold	10.18	10.18	10.18	10.18

## Liffe FTSE Index Option

Series	Settlement price	Settlement price	Settlement price	Settlement price
FTSE 100	4250	4300	4350	4400
FTSE 250	4250	4300	4350	4400
FTSE 350	4250	4300	4350	4400
FTSE 450	4250	4300	4350	4400
FTSE 550	4250	4300	4350	4400

## Commodity Indices

Index	Settlement price	Settlement price	Settlement price	Settlement price
Oil	10.18	10.18	10.18	10.18
Gold	10.18	10.18	10.18	10.18
Silver	10.18	10.18	10.18	10.18
Copper	10.18	10.18	10.18	10.18

## Latest Unit Trust Prices

Unit Trust	Price	Unit Trust	Price
British Equity	10.18	Global Growth	10.18
European Equity	10.18	Income	10.18
Global Equity	10.18	Property	10.18
Income	10.18	Real Estate	10.18

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## sport

## Satellites provide path to the stars

Last Sunday was going as well as it could have done for Denis van Uffelen – until it came to the question of transport.

Belgium's 16th-ranked tennis player, reconstructing his career after an elbow operation, had just earned himself £1,000 by winning the second event of the LTA Men's Indoor Satellite at Chigwell.

Now he needed to get to Eastbourne, where the third of the circuit's four stages was to take place. And there was no car to take him. He left, clutching his rackets and the knowledge that it was 21 stops on the Underground to Victoria, where he could get the train down to the South Coast. To say he looked dejected would be unfair. Resigned was more the word.

For the band of players currently sojourning between Bramhall, Chigwell, Eastbourne and Croydon, the LTA satellite event is a stop on the line which leads, ideally, to two further stations: Challenger events – and then the big terminus of the ATP Tour.

To get on board at the satellite stage – which operates all over the world – players need to be between 200 and 600 in the world rankings; Challenger events involve those between 60 and 250.

The player coming out on top in the current satellite circuit can earn up to 50 ATP points, which could move him 50 places up the rankings. Patrick Hughesman, of the LTA, reckons that 10 per cent of those at satellite level go on to higher things. It is not a huge propor-

**Mike Rowbottom** meets the tennis hopefuls on the hard road to the ATP Tour

tion, and those that make it tend to take a couple of years to work their way through.

Such was the career path of Tim Henman – to pluck a name out of the air – who began playing satellite tournaments in the autumn of 1993 and made a final appearance in February '95, rising in the process from 774th to 167th in the world.

"When I first saw Tim at 17, he came across as being very thin and spindly," Hughesman recalled. "But he has filled out a lot. He has a powerful build now."

With Wimbledon four months away, Henman is already building up for 1997. But Hughesman recalls that, at the time Britain's current No 1 was starting on the satellite scene, all the media attention was directed at his school-mate, James Bailey, the winner of the 1993 Australian Open junior title, who has since dropped out of the sport.

Henman's rise to fame has been inspirational, rather than daunting, for another of his old mates from Reeds School in Cobham: Jamie Delgado, who reached the Chigwell final before succumbing 6-3, 6-4 to Van Uffelen's power-serving game.

Delgado, 20 today, had the mixed blessing of achieving notable success at a young age, becoming the first Briton to win a title at the Orange Bowl international junior championships in Florida six years ago. At 14, he was among the top 10 ju-

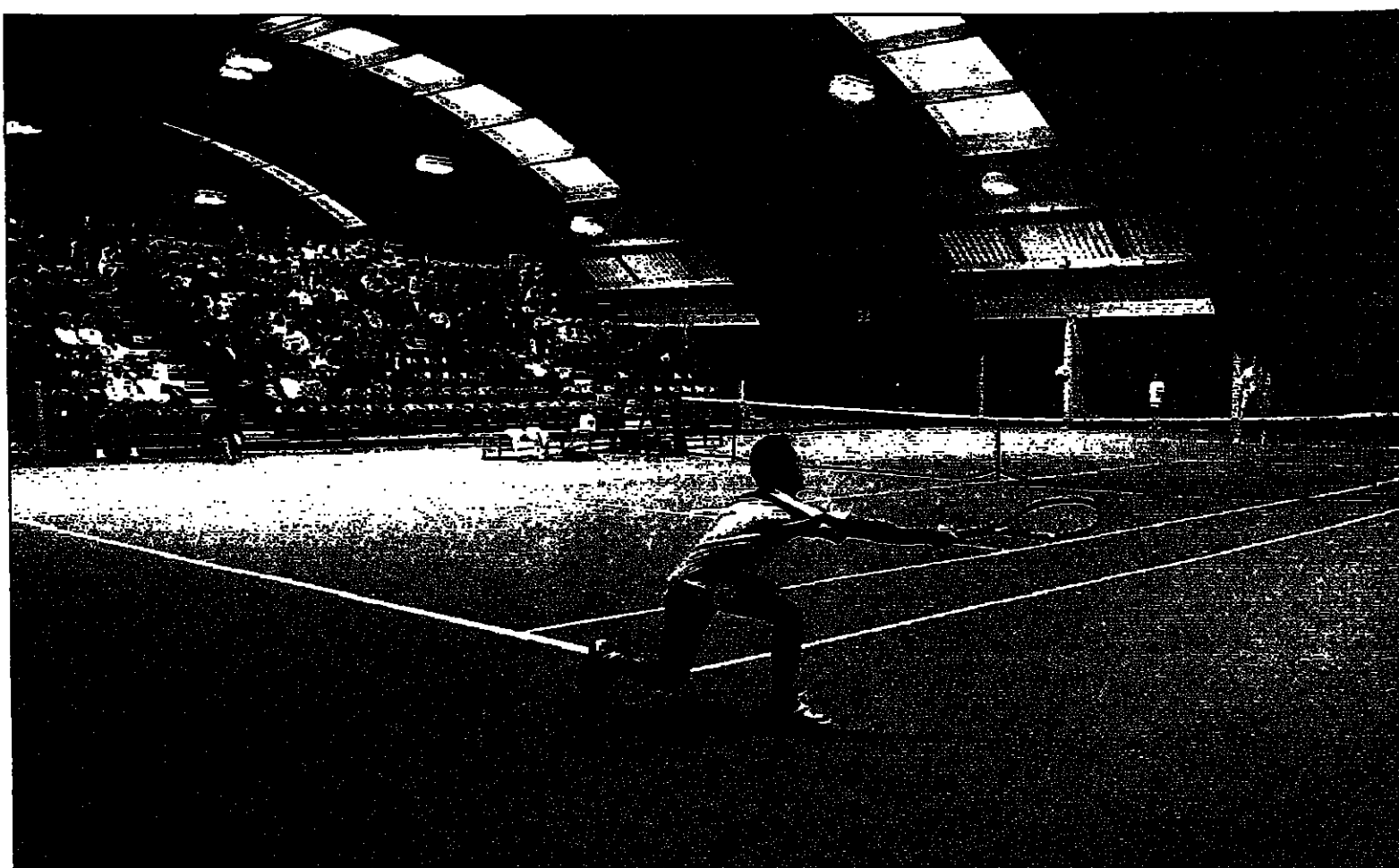
niors in the world. Now ranked around 300 in the world, this fine natural stroke player is having to work hard to follow in his schoolmate's footsteps. That he has only grown to 5ft 8in means that task is harder for him.

As Van Uffelen blasted down ace after ace on to the fast carpet surface in Chigwell on Sunday, it seemed that Delgado would need to put in some serious work in the weights room to allow his talents to shine. Delgado, however, remains optimistic. "When I won in Florida, obviously people did expect me to do well," he said. "But that's not my problem. I am very close to Challenger level now."

"Seeing Tim and Greg Rusedski do so well has a positive effect on players like myself. It inspires us to try and get to where they are. I often practice with Tim and Greg at Queen's Club, and they are both very helpful."

"Tim is very sensible, and he has given me a lot of advice on strategy and how to cope with various experiences."

As Van Uffelen and Delgado strive to move onwards and upwards in Eastbourne this week, the key strategy has to be one of survival. Delgado, at least, is likely to get a wild card to play at Wimbledon. He will know as well as anybody that, if he can produce his best tennis there, it will do more for him than 50 ATP points.



Stairway to Croydon: Jamie Delgado at full stretch in Chigwell, the Briton's latest stop on the LTA Satellite circuit

Photograph: Robert Hallam

## Kuerten consigns Agassi to early exit

Gustavo Kuerten of Brazil, ranked No 83 in the world, took advantage of a blistering serve and Andre Agassi's tender ankle to defeat the former world No 1 in 65 minutes at the St Jude tournament in Memphis yesterday.

The fourth-seeded Wimbledon runner-up, MaliVai Washington, also slowed by an injury he suffered in winning a Davis Cup singles match against Brazil, lost 7-6, 6-3 to the

108th-ranked Argentinian, Javier Frana.

In other second-round upsets, Germany's Alex Radulescu beat the sixth seed Jason Stoltenberg of Australia, Armenia's Sargis Sargsian removed the ninth-seeded American Alex O'Brien, Guillaume Raoux, of France, knocked out the 14th seed, Mark Woodforde of Australia, and Jeff Tarango beat the 16th-seeded fellow American Vince

Spadea. All the seeded players had received first-round byes and were seeing their first action of the tournament.

Todd Martin, twice the champion and the third seed, did progress, however, by overcoming the American qualifier Bryan Shelton 6-4, 6-4.

However, the performance of the 20-year-old Kuerten was the revelation of the night. The Brazilian drove in 18 aces, won 29 of 32 first-serve points and

did not commit a single double fault.

"For me, this was pretty nice," Kuerten said. "One year ago I was sitting by my TV at home watching [Agassi] play."

Kuerten was also matching Agassi's groundstroke for groundstroke and blasting winners past the Las Vegas even before Agassi sprained his already injured ankle in the second set. With the Brazilian leading 6-4, 3-1, the match was

halted for around 10 minutes while Agassi's ankle was taped and examined, allowing him to continue.

Martina Hingis, the Australian Open champion, yesterday signed a three-year sponsorship deal with Opel, believed to be worth around £300,000 a year – substantially less than the 10-year deal with Steffi Graf which the company cancelled in 1995.

Results, Digest, page 25

## Why Spain is smiles better for Robinson

When Michael Robinson left Liverpool for Spain in 1984, there was little to suggest that the move would be a mark of a fundamental change in his life.

Osasuna are one of the lesser lights of the Spanish league, and within two years a knee injury had forced him to retire anyway. However, the move took Robinson to Spain, and 13 years later he is still there. Indeed he is a national figure, thanks to his role as a television commentator in charge of the country's most popular sports show, one that has brought football's irreverent humour to study Spanish television.

The *Day After* is a lively, often hilarious, round-up of weekend highlights, with whizzy special effects, affectionate portraits of local clubs and phone-in polls for "goal of the day".

"Robin" is now a media celebrity and a year ago he joined the board of Spain's successful Canal Plus cable network. Not bad for a Leicester lad who started his broadcasting career with 100 Spanish words – "90 of them swear words". He describes his show casually enough, but it is easy to see how his cheeky-chappy grin and deadpan humour revolutionised Spanish sports reporting.

The programme's not too deep, really, pretty unpretentious. Our policy is: who and what are we going to praise today? We don't criticise much, don't want to be cruel. We want to show football's creative side."

The formula struck him when RTE, Spanish state television, sent him to cover the World Cup in Italy in 1990. He had been selling rights for Rupert Mur-

**Elizabeth Nash** reports from Madrid on the Englishman revered for his wit

doch's Screensport, but RTE was more interested in his face than his rights and snapped him up as a commentator.

"I'd been a footballer for 16 years but in Italy I saw things I'd never seen before: youngsters from all over the world with painted faces jumping into fountains and sleeping on pavements, the fun side of football. I thought: 'crumbs, this should be on telly'. No one showed that side of it."

His programme became such a hit that he sold up his house in Windsor and settled in Madrid with his wife Christine, son Liam, now 11, and daughter Aimee, 5. Earlier this year he published a best-selling book, *Las Cosas de Robin* (Robin's

Things), a chaty, witty autobiography and celebration of his adopted country. So little does he miss his home country that his English is peppered with Spanish expressions.

He says his success owes little to being English, but concedes that "the cradle of football" enjoys respect.

"Spaniards respect the nobility of English football, but they don't see English players as particularly artistic or talented, just good professionals."

British miners and engineers brought the game to Spain in 1898, and early teams were of English expats, including club managers, "who were always called Mr So-and-So". So Spain's

managers, Italian, Serb or British, are still called *Mister*.

But beleaguered Bobby Robson of Barcelona gets little mileage out of being British, Robinson reckons. And it did not save John Toshack, who recently quit Deportivo La Coruña. "Bobby Robson hasn't any cachet in Spain. He has a marvellous CV but that stands for nothing, Englishman or no. Barça are only going to accept him if he wins, otherwise they don't give a monkey's."

As Deportivo slipped to fourth place, Toshack was given no time to build his team. Robson faces the hostility of a generation nostalgic for Johan Cruyff's dream team that won the league four years running – "the most beautiful team I've ever seen," Robinson says.

"Cruyff had an impact

throughout Spain. Real Madrid was always the main club. But in 1990 things started to change.

All over the country in cities that had always been Madridista, you started seeing kiddies of eight or 10 in Barça shirts. My son is a Barça fan. Before Cruyff, you'd never see a Barça fan outside Catalonia. That's all changed."

Barcelona's chairman, Carlos Nunez, backs Robson, but Nunez himself faces re-election next year, and his 125,000 season-ticket holders will punish him for sacking Cruyff unless Robson delivers the league.

Spanish passion for football continues to mount. Crowds, some 14 per cent greater than in Britain, have been soaring for six years, and the appetite for televised football seems insatiable. Hence television's eagerness to pay huge sums for



Robinson: National figure

rights, enabling clubs to offer fat cheques to foreign stars.

So Robinson is in the right place at the right time. He flashes his wrap-around smile. "I feel I'm locked in a very tight and left to play on all the swings and tractors. The 90 minutes, the bits on the pitch, that's just an excuse for all the rest. That's the wonderful thing about football."

## Oldham move for Warnock

Neil Warnock is expected to be confirmed today as Oldham Athletic's manager until the end of the season. The former Luton manager, who has been at Boundary Park from Scarborough as Warnock's assistant to lead the First Division's bottom club's battle against relegation.

Warnock, sacked by Plymouth Argyle a fortnight ago despite leading them out of the Third Division last season, replaces Graham Sharp, who resigned earlier this month. In the past, he has also guided Notts County and Huddersfield to promotion.

"I have offered my services to the end of the season and I hope I can help Oldham and myself," Warnock said yesterday. "I'll do my best to save them."

Celtic have announced the signing of the central defender Enrico Annoni from Roma. He has agreed a three-year and five-month contract. Celtic hope to field the Italian in tomorrow's Scottish League Premier Division match at Motherwell, but are still waiting for international clearance from the Italian authorities.

Patrick Vieira's form for Arsenal received some reward yesterday when he was called up to the French squad for their friendly against the Netherlands next Wednesday.

Bryan Robson tried to smother Mark Schwarzer from Everton's grasp last night. The Middlesbrough manager, who changed his initial player-swap bid to straight cash, had talks with Schwarzer after the 24-year-old Bradford City goalkeeper had met officials from Everton, who had agreed a fee of £1.4m with the Valley Parade club. Schwarzer will give his answer today.

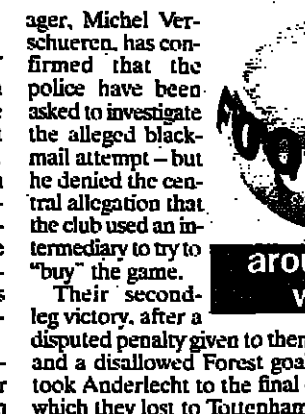
## Were Forest robbed in 1984?

## Belgium

Nottingham Forest's 1984 UEFA Cup semi-final defeat to the Belgian club, Anderlecht, is at the centre of a bribery probe. Two Belgians have been charged with blackmail in connection with match-fixing allegations. Jean Elst and Rene Van Aeken were released yesterday, with certain conditions attached, pending the police investigation.

The police launched an enquiry into the allegations after Anderlecht said they had been blackmailed by the two men. One of the pair claimed to have acted as an intermediary to fix the second leg, which Anderlecht won 3-0 after losing the first leg 2-0. They offered their story, in return for, about £25,000, to the Brussels newspaper, *Her Nieuwsblad*.

Anderlecht's general man-



ager, Michel Verschueren, has confirmed that the police have been asked to investigate the alleged blackmail attempt – but he denied the central allegation that the club used an intermediary to try to "buy" the game.

Their second-leg victory, after a disputed penalty given to them and a disallowed Forest goal, took Anderlecht to the final – which they lost to Tottenham.

## Turkey

The former Everton striker Daniel Amokachi is in trouble with his club, Besiktas, after they had to hire a private plane to get him back to Istanbul in time for a match.

The Nigerian arrived only

half an hour before the match against their city rivals, Fenerbahce, which Besiktas won 1-0. The club have fined Amokachi about £5,000 for his late start – but he is refusing to pay.

"I don't believe I committed any crime," Amokachi said. "Punishment will not be a lesson to me, it will just annoy me." He had missed a flight in London after being delayed returning from Nigeria, where he had been visiting his sick mother. It cost Besiktas about £11,000 to hire the plane.

## Netherlands

Patrick Deckers, a midfielder with the Dutch Second Division club, Eindhoven, has been sacked by his club for dropping his shorts and "flashing" at fans after being sent off against Helmond Sport on Monday.

"Showing ones' genitals in public is forbidden by law, and is seen as disturbing public order," the club said.

Rupert Metcalf

## Vase future in jeopardy

## Non-League notebook

RUPERT METCALF

With clubs from northern England providing five of the contestants in this weekend's FA Carlsberg Vase quarter-finals, the Federation Brewery Northern League, in particular, can be proud. It has produced three of the last eight, a fine achievement, but one that may have sad implications for the future of the Vase.

If Guisborough, one of the three Northern League representatives, can see off Taunton, the Screffix Direct Western League leaders, at their King George V ground on Sunday, three of the last four will be from the north.

Last season's final, between Clitheroe from Lancashire and Brigg from Humberside, drew a crowd of just 7,340 to Wembley – a long way below the Vase final record attendance of

26,487 for Sudbury Town against Tamworth in 1989.

The Football Association has already taken the controversial decision to ban clubs without floodlights from next season's Vase – a ruling which will lessen the grass-roots charm of the tournament. If this year's final draws another poor crowd, the rumour that the final might be moved away from Wembley could become reality. That would spoil the dreams of all who enter the Vase, in which the appeal of the national stadium, rather than the competition itself, is what matters.

Such fears, however, will not spoil the fun for the Northern League. Its clubs made regular trips to Wembley in the days of the FA Amateur Cup, but last season none made it past the last 32. This time, though, it is all smiles for one of the country's most competitive but most hospitable leagues.

Before Guisborough's big

day on Sunday, Whitby entertain Mossley, from the North West Counties League, tomorrow while Bedlington Terriers travel to Humberstone to take on North Ferriby, of the Northern Counties East League. North Ferriby's attack will be led by Andy Flounders, the former Hull City striker who helped Brigg win the Vase last year. The only all-southern quarter-final pairs two Ics League sides: Northwood and Banstead.

In the GM Vauxhall Conference, Halifax have put their former manager, George Mulhall, plus the former West Bromwich midfielder Kieran O'Regan in temporary charge of team affairs, following last weekend's departure of John Carroll and his assistant, Billy Rodaway.

The England semi-professional side play their first fixture this season on Tuesday, when they meet the Republic of Ireland at St Patrick's Athletic's ground in Dublin.

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## Women at Twickenham

Sir: What "hallowed turf"? I would like to inform Glenn Moore ("Twickenham's hallowed turf to resound to football boots", 18 February) that Twickenham has indeed been used for something "other than rugby union".

As a schoolgirl in Twickenham during the war, our own playing field having been carved up for the erection of air raid shelters, I used to cross the tracks regularly to the rugby union ground to play hockey.

It has therefore already been used for an elegant game played by ladies.

AUDREY ALLEN

Hereford 19 February

Skill takes a knock

Sir: From Glenn Moore's, Mike Rowbottom's and Ken Jones' analysis of the England/Italy

## sports letters

## Fuss over Guscott

Sir: In Ireland we used to believe that we had a monopoly on committing hard-kick at the international rugby selection table. We were wrong. The English rugby selectors, by their continuing to ignore the sublime skills of Jeremy Guscott in favour of the out-of-his class Philip de Glanville, provide proof that the disease is rampant.

JOHN O'SHEA, Monkstown, Ireland 17 February

## Broadside for broadcasting

Sir: Now that our brave lads in New Zealand have re-discovered the art of winning Test matches, is it too much to ask

game you could easily be forgiven for thinking that only Matt Le Tissier took to the field for the home side. The tradition of knocking skill players lives on.

You get magic from skill players, not workhorses. Ken Jones' muddled mind produced this gem: "England could not be faulted for their commitment in the second half, but, when it came to technical accomplishment they were inferior to the opposition." So what do Messers Moore, Rowbottom and Jones advocate? Drop Le Tissier. He's had his day. Let him join the long line of talent that England have lost over the decades and foreign managers would have given half their squads for.

R W BAYLEY Hampton Middlesex 13 February

Sir: Now that our brave lads in New Zealand have re-discovered the art of winning Test matches, is it too much to ask

that BBC Radio re-discovers the art of cricket broadcasting?

The BBC pioneered the "ball-by-ball" commentary many years ago and Test Match Special became an institution, but it has to be said that its application to the task has been lacking recently (of our brave lads).

Please – no more Shipping Forecasts, Open University, chopping the last 15 minutes before lunch for ephemeral trivia like Parliament etc. Let us celebrate our return to winning ways by re-instating "ball-by-ball" commentaries for the whole of the play as per the original, brilliant idea.

GEORFFREY COBB Prestbury, Cheshire 18 February

Letters should be marked "For publication" and should contain daytime and evening phone numbers. They should be sent to Sports Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, London E14 5DL. They may be shortened for reasons of space.

## Pride of Preston

Preston North End have played a proud part in the origins of the professional game, and yesterday it was announced that they have succeeded in their bid to house the National Football Museum.

The Museum, paid for largely by the Heritage Lottery Fund, and the first of its kind in the country, will be located at Deepdale and is expected to open next year.

Preston originally intended opening a club museum, but extended their plans to create a national centre. It will house football memorabilia from all over the world, the centrepiece being the FIFA Museum Collection, built up by Harry Langton. The project will cost an estimated £7m, the Heritage Lottery Fund providing a £5.7m grant and the remainder coming from national and local businesses.

"Preston occupies a special

place in the history of football," said. "The club was one of the 12 founder members of the Football League in 1888 and Deepdale is the oldest ground in the Football League."

"England is widely recognised as the birthplace of football. The Football Museum will combine the passion for our national sport with a unique collection representing every aspect, from fine art to fanatics."

Keith Cooper, FIFA's Director of Communications, said: "We have been pleased to back Preston's persistent efforts to realise a project which is really long overdue in England."

Tom Finney, Preston's president whose own place in football history is secure, was enthusiastic. "It is fantastic to have got the funding," he said. "To have the FIFA Collection is a feather in our cap."



# England captain's Lions fury

Rugby Union  
CHRIS HEWETT

Fran Cotton must be wondering whether it might be easier to dust off his boots and take on the Springboks himself. When he agreed to manage the Lions in South Africa this summer, the former England prop was relishing the prospect of a scrap or two along the way - he was never one to shirk a fight, after all - but he probably considered himself safe from the flak until his arrival in Johannesburg.

Wrong. Six days after receiving an earful from Will Carling on the subject of the Lions tour - the eminent Harlequin's anger at being accused by the manager of using the captaincy as a bargaining tool oscillated between wrath and rage - Cotton yesterday ran into another fustian from Phil de Glanville. Carling's fellow England centre and successor as national skipper.

De Glanville, left out of Cotton's preliminary squad of 62, fired his bullets in the hallowed surroundings of the Cambridge Union, no less. "It is no great secret that I do not get on with Fran Cotton," he told a group of students attending the latest in a series of addresses by leading British sportsmen. "When I was one of the England players' representatives during difficult early negotiations with the Rugby Football Union this season, I had some interesting discussions with him and, when he was subsequently appointed Lions manager, I thought it unlikely that I would be going to South Africa. International selection is a personal thing."

Given that De Glanville had already signalled his displeasure at the entire concept of a preliminary squad, the purpose of which has never been entirely clear, it can be assumed that he has now slammed the Lions door firmly in his own face. Cotton, who was attending meetings in London yesterday and was unavailable for comment, would probably pick himself at centre before either of the England first-choices.

Much to the muted disappointment of those who saw Jeremy Guscott confirm his status as a world-class performer in the final three minutes of the victory over Ireland in Dublin last weekend, De Glanville and Carling will still be first choices when England take on France in a climactic Five Nations shoot-out at Twickenham on Saturday week. Guscott returns to the bench, as does Austin Healey, the Leicester scrum-half who also caught the eye at Lansdowne Road.

Jack Rowell's decision to name an unchanged team was hardly earth-shattering. Indeed, Guscott's brilliance in setting up two late tries for Tony Underwood might even have confirmed the England coach in a belief that his old Bath protégé

is perfect bench material - a stiletto-sharp runner, tailor-made to take advantage of tiring defences and widening gaps towards the end of a match. In which case, the outlook looks even more depressing for Guscott than a week ago, for he is enough of a traditionalist to believe that rugby is about 15 players, not 21.

In defence of making consistency his chief virtue, Rowell will point to England's 1995 Grand Slam campaign, when the same 15 served in all four matches. It was a similar story in 1991, when England also went through the Five Nations unbeaten. In the other Grand Slam year of the decade, 1992, they made only one change, bringing in Dean Richards for Tim Rodber for the second half of the championship.

There are, however, changes to the A side for the second touring international with France tomorrow week. The Bath prop, Kevin Yates, and the Gloucester lock, Dave Sims, are restored to the tight five while Chris Sheehy of Wasps returns to the back row. They replace Rob Hardwick, John Rolyer, and Martin Connolly respectively.

Richard Cockrell of Leicester replaces his club-mate, Dorian West, at hooker after filling in for Phil Greening on the senior bench in Dublin. At half-back, Kyran Bracken and Alex King return from injury for the Gloucester pairing of Scott Benton and Mark Mapletoft.

Several Welsh rugby clubs are considering taking the Welsh Rugby Union to court if the top division of the National League is reduced from 12 to eight teams next season.

Several clubs in the relegation zone as well as Division Two's leading teams are up in arms. Llandovery are to seek compensation of at least £25,000 if they cannot be promoted. Aberavon have threatened a writ and Treorchy are ready to take out an injunction.

The luckless Scott Hastings, dropped from the full Scotland side and A team, has had to drop out of the squad for the World Cup Sevens after injuring his knee in practice.

Ian Smith, the Scottish international flanker, has severed ties with Gloucester, his home-town club, and agreed terms with Second Division Moseley yesterday.

**ENGLAND'S FIVE NATIONS PRELIMINARY SQUAD:** 1. Prop: P. Jones (Worcester); 2. Prop: P. Jones (Worcester); 3. Prop: P. Jones (Worcester); 4. Prop: P. Jones (Worcester); 5. Prop: P. Jones (Worcester); 6. Prop: P. Jones (Worcester); 7. Prop: P. Jones (Worcester); 8. Prop: P. Jones (Worcester); 9. Prop: P. Jones (Worcester); 10. Prop: P. Jones (Worcester); 11. Prop: P. Jones (Worcester); 12. Prop: P. Jones (Worcester); 13. Prop: P. Jones (Worcester); 14. Prop: P. Jones (Worcester); 15. Prop: P. Jones (Worcester); 16. Prop: P. Jones (Worcester); 17. Prop: P. Jones (Worcester); 18. Prop: P. Jones (Worcester); 19. Prop: P. Jones (Worcester); 20. Prop: P. Jones (Worcester); 21. Prop: P. Jones (Worcester); 22. Prop: P. Jones (Worcester); 23. Prop: P. Jones (Worcester); 24. Prop: P. Jones (Worcester); 25. Prop: P. Jones (Worcester); 26. Prop: P. Jones (Worcester); 27. Prop: P. Jones (Worcester); 28. Prop: P. Jones (Worcester); 29. Prop: P. Jones (Worcester); 30. Prop: P. 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# Schmeichel faces racist abuse charge

## Football

ROB KING

Peter Schmeichel could become the first footballer to face criminal charges for alleged racist abuse as his feud with Ian Wright burst back into life.

While everyone expected the Arsenal striker to be charged with misconduct by the Football Association for his behaviour at Highbury on Wednesday night, it was the Manchester United goalkeeper who found himself in deeper trouble.

Wright's complaint that he subjected him to racial abuse during last November's Premiership game at Old Trafford had not, as everyone believed, been quietly shelved.

Instead, the police have been carrying out an extensive investigation and papers have now been lodged with the Crown Prosecution Service.

There were no close witnesses to the alleged incident, but several lip-readers claimed that television pictures showed the Danish international swearing at Wright and, if the CPS decides that evidence is strong enough, Schmeichel will find himself in a unique test case.

"There has been a long-running police investigation into the original incident at Old Trafford," Steve Double, an FA spokesman, said. "As a result of police inquiries into the alleged racist remarks a report has been compiled and is currently being considered by the Crown Prosecution Service."

It would be the third time that United players have found themselves in a criminal court. Eric Cantona assaulted a Palace fan with his famous kung-fu leap two years ago, while Paul Ince was acquitted for his part in the same incident.

Schmeichel could also find himself in trouble with the FA for the tunnel scuffle with Wright after Arsenal's 2-1 defeat on Wednesday.

Arsenal believe he provoked Wright, who needed restraining by three policemen and the physiotherapist, Gary Lewin. Inquiries were continuing yesterday to see if there may have been a racist element to the incident.

Schmeichel was incensed by Wright's reckless, two-footed lunge which has left him with a badly-bruised ankle and doubt for tomorrow's game at Chelsea. The keeper was seen wagging his finger at Wright.

## Tufnell is talk of the town again

### Cricket

DEREK PRINGLE  
reports from Christchurch  
New Zealand 222-6  
England 226-6  
England win by four wickets

It may not have pleased the purists, but New Zealand cricket's attempt to merge the one-day game with rock 'n' roll was certainly to the liking of Philip Tufnell. The left-arm spinner, whose chosen song for the series was Oasis's "Cigarettes and Alcohol," took a career-best 4 for 22 as England recorded their first overseas one-day win against a Test-playing nation since beating South Africa in Bloemfontein, 13 matches ago.

Ironically, Tufnell, who also won his first man of the match award as England went 1-0 up in the five-match series, was not expected to play, and only a late decision by captain Michael Atherton - after he had seen the condition of the pitch - gave the spinner his first limited-over run-out in over two years.

It has been a trying 48 hours for Tufnell, not least because of the not so mysterious posters that have suddenly sprung up around Christchurch.

The posters which read - "Phil Tufnell must agree that Bardsley is Christchurch's best joint" - are the talk of the town, though their blatant appearance does tend to lend credibility to the claim that the whole thing was just a crude publicity stunt, timed to coincide with England winning the Test series. "See you down there," quipped Tufnell to assembled journalists who attended a terse post-match press conference.

Unsurprisingly then, that he was the object of the crowd's attention - most of it puerile - long before he got the ball in his hand. It was a situation the old Tufnell would probably not have handled at all well, and although the latest version is perhaps not the exciting bowler of old, he is more imperturbable than he used to be.

He even made the grand gesture of doffing his cap at the end of his spell, a touch the large, partisan crowd at Lancaster Gate greatly appreciated. "I thought he coped with it well," Atherton said. "I had a chat with him beforehand and told him to be strong. He has not played many one-day internationals recently and his performance was exceptional."

In fact, he did not come on until the 20th over, when the score was on 87 for 1. But if his introduction was delayed, his impact was immediate, and he instantly removed the hard-hitting Nathan Astle, who tamely chipped a leading edge to Thorpe at extra cover. Two overs later, a similar fate befell Adam Parore as he lobbed a return catch to the bowler.

With the odd ball turning, Tufnell proved difficult to get away, and he and Croft more or less put a brake on the Kiwi's run rate.

Deceleration always creates pressure in limited-over situations, and it was not long before Cairns perished at deep square leg trying to chance his arm. Two overs later, Fleming was stumped after he set off for a leg bye without waiting to see if the ball had eluded Stewart who promptly whipped the balls off.

Once Tufnell had finished however, New Zealand were able to take their score to 226, as 66 runs were taken from the last 10 overs.



On a high: Phil Tufnell celebrates his dismissal of Adam Parore in Christchurch yesterday

Photograph: Allsop

malty. Both batsmen were in exquisite form, and their respective boundary counts, a six and eight fours were identical.

In the end, after a late flurry of wickets, England's victory fell somewhere in between, and with five runs wanted from nine balls, a forceful two ball innings from Croft - who struck Heath Davis for successive fours through the covers - broke the tension.

Having won the toss and batted, New Zealand got off to a storming start, with both Nathan Astle and Bryan Young piercing Atherton's well set off side field. Astle in particular, hit

the ball with great power, particularly through extra cover, and he took 12 off one over by Alan Mullally.

Such extravagance seemed a snip in comparison to Robert Croft, whose third over went for 16. Croft prefers to bowl to the off-stump line, but as Atherton brought him on before the fielding restrictions were lifted, he was forced to bowl at leg-stump instead. Croft, however, as he has done all winter, persevered, and his remaining nine overs cost the Welshman just 25 runs.

Mind you, the conditions certainly suited spin and the pitch used was the same one the Test had been played on, which meant it was over seven days old by the time England's innings took place under lights.

As is the case in New Zealand, it was a play clearly designed to suit the home side's slow medium-pace dribblers Gavin Larsen and Chris Harris, whose accurate but paceless deliveries have long been a feature of their success at one-day cricket.

But if the volume of runs was compromised by the pitch, the game was nevertheless a 25,000 sell-out, and people were jammed into every nook and

## Rangers rival United for Stam

ALAN NIXON

Manchester United and Rangers are rivals in pursuit of the £5m-rated Dutch defender, Jaap Stam. United scouts and the Rangers assistant manager, Archie Knox, watched the PSV Eindhoven player at the weekend and United have already had an initial offer for the 24-year-old rejected.

Dutch sources said last night that officials from the Premiership leaders were talking with Stam's representatives in London in midweek. Stam is the right age for both United and Rangers, who are looking to replace Gary Pallister and Richard Gough respectively.

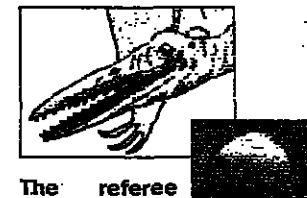
Alex Ferguson, the United manager, has attempted to sign Barcelona's Miguel Angel Nadal and Real Betis's Roberto Rios without success.

## Royle's historic charge

Joe Royle has been disciplined by the Football Association for calling the referee David Elleray a pterodactyl. The prehistoric reference landed the Everton manager a dispute charge at the FA yesterday, writes Alan Nixon.

Elleray, a housemaster at Harrow School, knew exactly what Royle meant when he called him the name after the Blackburn game following the sending off of striker Duncan Ferguson. Pterodactyls were angular-headed dinosaurs, half-bird and half-beast.

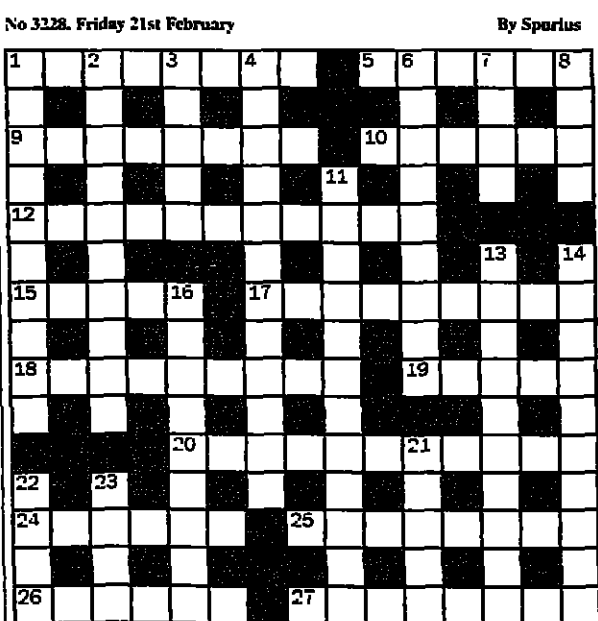
Elleray took the comparison personally and Royle was found guilty of insulting language by the FA hearing. He was ordered to pay costs, estimated at more than £1,000, and was warned about his future conduct.



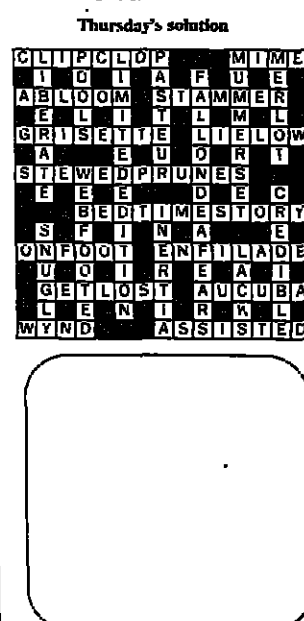
The referee David Elleray (right) and a pterodactyl

Royle was furious. As he pointed out, the Arsenal striker Ian Wright has got away with calling a referee a "Muppet" in the past. Elleray had sent off Ferguson for insulting him in a more conventional manner when he refused a penalty claim.

## THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
- Hoodlum creating awful fracas in front of church (8)
  - Obscure queen in work by Irish poet (6)
  - Excels in old-fashioned theatrical productions (8)
  - Salesman's attitude to patch (6)
  - Regular features in which entertainer takes off? (5,6)
  - Appeal to unruly teenager, being fed up? (5)
  - Ways artist will break law - it's the limit (4,5)
  - Ill-shaven characters hanging around in Southern city (9)
  - Girl gives some honest answers (5)
  - Essentials of grenadier's training you'll find on notice board? (7,4)
- DOWN**
- Displaying tough exterior after performance (10)
  - Negotiating at a summit secures nothing but suspension of certain controls (10)
  - Starts to fortify one's liver, ingesting complex type of acid (5)
  - Very obvious it's not stained glass? (7,5)
  - Continues to have printing equipment running (7,2)



- ACROSS**
- One such as Tom at Oxford, with at least three siblings? (4)
  - Peer under organ loft, but not frequently? (4)
  - Rare book identified in early morning paper (5,7)
  - Racists due to receive punishment for insensitivity (10)
  - This water's unsuitable for a knitted garment (10)
  - Upper parts of figures generating some interest, possibly? (9)
  - Zest shown by American ryeoon initially admitted to Japanese game (5)
  - Bathroom item producing some aromatic fether when inverted (4)
  - Creature having brown mark on skin (4)
- DOWN**
- Going for a game of golf? (6)
  - Mo's to be written out? (8)
  - Fold note into wallet (6)
  - In books, accepting a handout's tantamount to being lazy (8)

**Lancaster Park scoreboard**

NEW ZEALAND	10-0-30-0; Tufnell 10-0-22-4	Full 1-28 (Atherton) 2-28 (Fleming) 3-198 (Thorpe) 4-205 (Stewart) 5-207 (Atherton) 6-228 (Croft)
1-21 min, 20 balls, 2 fours	2-27 min, 20 balls, 2 fours	3-27 min, 20 balls, 2 fours
4-27 min, 20 balls, 2 fours	5-27 min, 20 balls, 2 fours	6-27 min, 20 balls, 2 fours
7-27 min, 20 balls, 2 fours	8-27 min, 20 balls, 2 fours	9-27 min, 20 balls, 2 fours
10-27 min, 20 balls, 2 fours	11-27 min, 20 balls, 2 fours	12-27 min, 20 balls, 2 fours
13-27 min, 20 balls, 2 fours	14-27 min, 20 balls, 2 fours	15-27 min, 20 balls, 2 fours
16-27 min, 20 balls, 2 fours	17-27 min, 20 balls, 2 fours	18-27 min, 20 balls, 2 fours
19-27 min, 20 balls, 2 fours	20-27 min, 20 balls, 2 fours	21-27 min, 20 balls, 2 fours
22-27 min, 20 balls, 2 fours	23-27 min, 20 balls, 2 fours	24-27 min, 20 balls, 2 fours
25-27 min, 20 balls, 2 fours	26-27 min, 20 balls, 2 fours	27-27 min, 20 balls, 2 fours

## Atherton the motivator

Michael Atherton took Phil Tufnell aside for a quiet chat before yesterday's one-day international. It worked wonders. Tufnell's 4 for 22 was the perfect response to the dope-smoking allegations of two days ago, setting England up for victory.

"I had a quiet chat with Phil before the game and told him to be strong," Atherton said. "He did very well and I thought he coped excellently with the occasion. The crowd were always going to give him a bit of flak but at the end I think they appreciated a very good bowling spell. I'm sure that's why Phil doffed his cap."

Atherton confirmed that Tufnell would not have been included normally, but that the condition of the pitch used for the Test dictated the choice of both spinners.

Tufnell said: "It was decided to play me when we had a look at the wicket, and it was nice to play in a one-day international after a couple of years' gap."

"There was a good crowd and I gave them a little wave. There was some rough to exploit and I think that was always on the batsman's minds. Then, when we batted, a great partnership between Alec Stewart and Graham Thorpe made sure of the game."

Atherton was understandably pleased with his side's performance in general. "We had a little bit of a wobble at the end, but it's a good start to the series."

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